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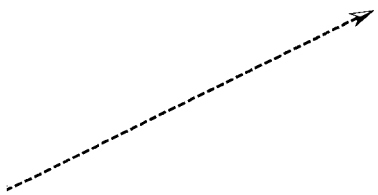

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# TRB®

## FROM WASHINGTON

# Low fiber

The structure of the data superhighway is "the civil rights issue of the twenty-first century." This opinion comes from the United Church of Christ, part of a coalition of liberal groups that recently landed on the front page of *The New York Times* with a study alleging "electronic redlining." The study looked at neighborhoods where the Baby Bells are testing fiber-optic "video dial tone" service. It sensed a recurring theme of affluence and whiteness and concluded that the superhighway is bypassing the underprivileged. The study's sponsors, among them the NAACP, want "anti-redlining" rules in the epic telecommunications legislation now forming in Congress.

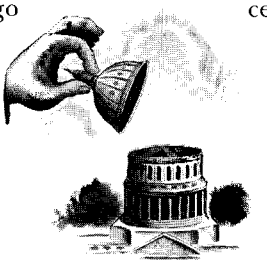
There is certainly much to dislike in the emerging data superhighway (including the name—hereafter: the "dataway"). And there are things about it that will indeed harm the urban underclass. But whether "redlining" is among them, and warrants a liberal crusade, is another question.

The issue turns partly on which of the two basic visions of the dataway you buy. One is the "cornucopia of edification" vision: in the world of tomorrow, you will download interactive cello lessons, join in a global seminar on arms control, take a virtual tour of Incan ruins. In the alternative scenario (the "cornucopia of narcotics" vision), the dataway is a tool by which corporations will pump the contents of Blockbuster video into the nerve endings of Americans so long as they retain enough sentience to interactively pay their bills. Plus home shopping.

The first vision seems to be assumed by the authors of the redlining report, and is held also by dataway boosters in Congress. Unfortunately, it's the second vision that drives the "market forces" these boosters would unleash to build the dataway. (The bills in Congress would free the Bells, cable companies, MCI, etc. to compete in everything—local and long distance, voice and video. Since the presumably hot video market requires broad bandwidth, these companies would be enticed into laying fiber, thus building the dataway. Of course, barring government constraint, they'll wire the most lucrative areas first; hence "redlining.")

Now, if the dataway works as it should (inscrutable technical translation: if we build a "switched, open network"), the two visions can coexist. People will face nearly infinite options, via data vendors large and small, high-minded and low, and will be free to choose their fate. The question behind the redlining debate is: What choices would underclass teenagers make? Virtual calculus or Mortal Kombat?

First of all, teenagers in general will tend to take fluff and trash over education. Parents, too. In *any* neighborhood, somewhere around 95 percent of any dataway subsidy would go for light entertainment. (An anti-redlining law amounts to a subsidy to lay fiber in economically unattractive areas, financed by an implicit tax on fiber in upscale areas.) Second, if the "underclass" label is accurate, the numbers will be even worse in the inner city. The term connotes a culture in which the values and aspirations absorbed by children don't foster efficient self-improvement.



Of course, there are stories about inner-city kids who would be great scholars were scholarship not ridiculed by their peers. Maybe some covert virtual calculus is just what they need. But there's also the perverse possibility that the dataway will pull some underclass kids further under. During the heyday of broadcast television, video was a unifier, a lifeline to the mainstream. The dataway will be a fragmenter—like cable T.V., only more so. It will segregate us into micro-communities, envelop us in our distinctive obsessions. Right now the obsessions of many underclass teenagers aren't good.

Even if being left off the dataway would be a net handicap for the underclass, it's not clear that we'd have a big problem on our hands. There is some doubt about the redlining report's central suggestion that redlining truly will be a lasting urban phenomenon. Granted, showcase fiber-optic experiments take place mostly in well-coiffed suburbs; and, granted, cable companies have often entered inner cities only under political pressure. But many of those companies then found that people there not only subscribe to cable, but pay for premium channels. A large fraction of their small entertainment dollar goes to home video. The market will bring fiber to the Upper West Side faster than to Harlem, but maybe not much faster.

Redlining is more likely in the country, where people live far apart. Historically, the Baby Bells—protected monopolies committed by law to provide "universal" (broadly affordable) service—have met that goal by cross-subsidy. Artificially high urban rates permitted artificially low rural rates. But as the Bells are exposed to competition, artificial rates will become untenable. In the new world, many rural residents won't get fiber without specific government help.

Whether or not such help is in order, the bills in Congress would provide some, in the form of an expanded universal service fund. The money will come from all corporate players—in effect, a tax on dataway construction. Presumably, rural interests will try to steer the proceeds toward rural fiber while civil rights groups (judging by the redlining report) try to steer it toward urban fiber.

The inner city definitely needs the money, but are living rooms really the place where it will most help the underclass? How about the public schools instead? We all know how badly they spend money, but surely they don't waste ninety-five cents of each dollar, as an anti-redlining subsidy probably would.

The spending needn't stop at free dataway hookups for schools (already an easy and popular sound bite). Urban schools also need computers, books, teachers, desks, walls. They're a disaster area, the most vivid disgrace in American government.

The fiberization of America brings that rare and sublime moment in public policy: the birth of a cash cow. We can tax fiber without any group distinctly feeling much pain. Of course, this would slow dataway construction. But how tragic is that? Whatever its redeeming features, the dataway will encourage cultural division at a time of divisiveness. And let's face it: it will probably increase income inequality, too. Presumably more kids will use the dataway educationally in Hyde Park (if only under parental pressure) than in the Robert Taylor Homes. With or without redlining laws, and with or without redlining, the dataway will bring economic benefits to Americans in inverse proportion to their need for the benefits. Nationwide construction delays aren't something that liberals need mourn.

A heavy fiber tax, given mainly to inner-city schools, would be an uphill battle in Congress. But at least it's a goal worthy of the civil rights movement. Subsidizing teenagers who watch T.V. is not.

**ROBERT WRIGHT**



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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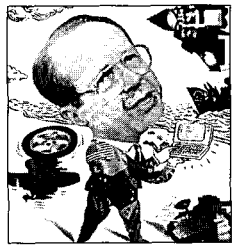

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## The Clintons' lust

**To the editors:**

Regarding the careful dissection of President Clinton's character in "Distinguishing Characteristics" (The Editors, May 30): yes, character does matter. As president, Clinton must not only be a policy expert, but a leader. The president himself recognizes this role in speeches that emphasize the limits of government and stress the need for a rejuvenation of values. But how seriously will people take the message when the messenger is plagued by scandal? The fact is that in selecting Clinton, Democrats entered into a Faustian bargain with a flawed but highly capable candidate who seemed to offer the best hope of regaining the presidency. Clinton's legislative aims and achievements will continue to earn deserved support. Those who remain faithful will do so not because of who Clinton is, but in spite of it.

JONATHAN HAFETZ
*Brooklyn, New York*

**To the editors:**

Is there really a stark dichotomy between the Clintons' lust for political power and their policy agenda, which invariably increases the role of government in society, along with their power and that of their colleagues? In "Distinguishing Characteristics," you cite Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson as examples of even worse transgressors with respect to corruption and abuse of power. Both men, of course, also devoted the bulk of their efforts in the White House to the enhancement of federal government power. Johnson created the Great Society at the behest of not much more than a handful of sociologists while conducting an unpopular war. Nixon fleshed out the Great Society welfare state, imposed wage and price controls and escalated the war in Vietnam.

One need not reject the idea that people of good will can and do support the expansion of government power in acknowledging that the enhancement of such power is the logical policy approach for those who tend to be corrupted by it. You may think that a National Health Board, appointed by the president, with extensive discretionary control over one-seventh of the U.S. economy, is a "noble" venture, but you'd be better advised to view it as the handiwork of those who "are not immune to the perks of power."

EDWARD H. CRANE
*President, Cato Institute*
*Washington, D.C.*

## Shirking

**To the editors:**

In his May 16 TRB ("Any Volunteers?"), Michael Kinsley proposes that voluntary expeditionary forces of Americans should fight wars they feel strongly about. Kinsley's proposal could be called the sandlot baseball principle: for each mission, sign up volunteers, with no coercion, no draft and no orders.

But the tough part of going to war is not the beginning, but the middle and the end. Soon after any struggle becomes grim, the stream of volunteers will dry up. Who will rescue the volunteers if they get into deep trouble? More volunteers? Not very likely. Rather, we will have to order reluctant regulars or even draftees to go to war.

Kinsley's "market-oriented" approach toward recruiting soldiers is curious for one conspicuously identified as "on the left." But here at least, Kinsley demonstrates a kind of consistency. Let those who are too poor to have other options do the fighting that America's more privileged classes approve, but don't want to do themselves. The line between a market-oriented military and a mercenary army becomes hard to distinguish.

An army of volunteers also bypasses the Constitution. It is Congress that declares war and the president who must act as commander in chief. The Supreme Court holds that neither can delegate powers outside their branch of government. Letting soldiers pick and choose their wars clearly violates the principle of civilian control of the military. Furthermore, in the absence of Congress and the president, who decides on whose side we should fight? CNN? By allowing soldiers to select their wars, we come to the ultimate legacy of Vietnam: a shirking by national leaders of all responsibility for who should fight. Is this how today's elites who dodged the draft in Vietnam finally come to rationalize their behavior?

CHARLES MOSKOS and JOHN WHEELER
*Evanston, Illinois*

**Michael Kinsley replies:**

The nasty tone of this letter bewilders me, especially coming from Charles Moskos, whose writings I admire. First, I never "dodged the draft." Second, my column was an attempt to address the very problem Moskos and Wheeler raise: that elites make the decision to go to war and nonelites do the fighting. With the end of the cold war, "optional" involvements in places like Bosnia raise the issue even more forcibly. Maybe volunteer expeditionary forces are the wrong solution to this problem. But why is it contemptible even to raise the possibility?

The authors' constitutional point is silly. As I wrote, the government—i.e., the president and Congress—would have to make the initial decision to commit the United States. Relying on volunteers after that would hardly violate civilian control of the military. Their point that wars sometimes last longer than expected and volunteers could dry up is a better one. But everyone's favorite lesson of Vietnam these days is that military engagements (at least "optional" ones) should have an "exit strategy." This would be just one more reason to have a good one.

As for the sneer about a "mercenary army": we have one now, if that's how you wish to describe the all-volunteer force. Soldiers who volunteer for a particular mission would be less likely than those in the permanent AVF to be motivated solely by economic necessity. Moskos and Wheeler might prefer a universal draft to the AVF, but Bosnia-type involvements will never require more than a tiny fraction of the eligible citizenry, so the selection problem remains.

## Sticky tar

**To the editors:**

Too bad John B. Judis spoiled "Three Wise Men" (May 30) with the wicked falsehood that Dr. Russell Kirk was anti-Semitic. My dictionary defines anti-Semitism as "opposition to, hatred of or agitation against, Jews." To anyone familiar with Kirk and his works, the charge is absurd. His *The Roots of American Order* lauds ancient Israel as one of the sources of our moral order. Yes, Kirk opposed neoconservatives. That many happened to be Jewish was not the issue. The issue, as readers of conservative journals such as *Chronicles* know, is neoconservatives' efforts to drag conservatism leftward, embracing the welfare state, intrusive government and interventionist, crusading, globalist foreign policy. In *The Politics of Prudence*, Kirk gave neoconservatives praise and criticism, but expressed no anti-Semitism. Neoconservatives, by contrast, sometimes treated Kirk shabbily. The August/September 1991 *First Things* ran a review of Kirk's *The Conservative Constitution* that was so vicious that his publisher, David Bovenizer of Regnery Gateway, wrote in protest.

JOHN ATTARIAN
*Ann Arbor, Michigan*

## Not flirting

**To the editors:**

In his review of Stephen Koch's *Double*



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*Lives: Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas Against the West* ("Assignment in Utopia," May 30), David Caute criticizes Koch's thesis that many intellectuals during the '30s were witting or unwitting dupes in the propaganda activities of the Soviet Union. He notes that many "were neither Communist Party members, nor, on inspection, Marxists," implying that they were really just well-meaning folks who let their enthusiasm run amok.

Caute misses the point. The intellectual fellow-travelers of the '30s were not earnest college students flirting with an exotic philosophy. They were people who desired to, and believed they deserved to, shape opinion. As Richard Pipes has noted about the prerevolutionary Russian intelligentsia, Western intellectuals have always been addicted to utopian fantasies, especially those where intellectuals would play the leading role. The professed social consciousness of intellectuals was really narcissism; consequently, they turned away from Stalinism only after discovering that life in the "workers' paradise" would be less than paradise. Given the arrogance and pretentiousness of Shaw and Lillian Hellman, among others, one might have expected something better from the intellectual elite than suspension of their critical faculties.

MARC W. SCHNEIDER
*Rockville, Maryland*

## Much ado

**To the editors:**

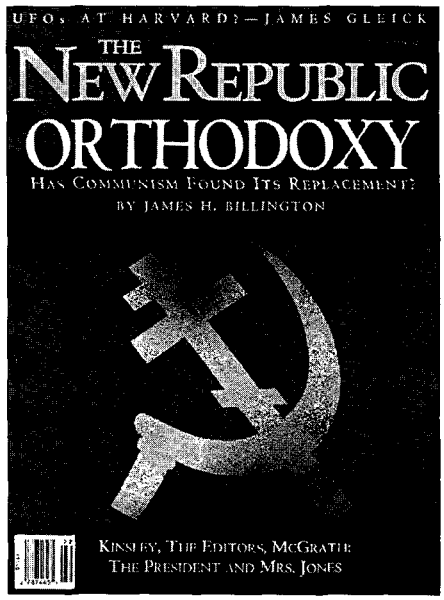
Fie on you! Before you went to print with Robert Brustein's review of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Winter's Tale* ("Separated by a Common Playwright," May 30), recently presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, didn't anyone bother to check the title of William Shakespeare's play? It's *The Winter's Tale*, not *A Winter's Tale*. Furthermore, the quote with which Brustein closes his review, attributed to "one character," isn't a quote from *The Winter's Tale* at all. "The world must be peopled" is from Act II, scene iii of *Much Ado About Nothing*. That's Benedick's famous rationalization for falling in love with Beatrice. Brustein had best brush up on his Shakespeare.

LISA SACK
*New York, New York*

**To the editors:**

Am I the only reader who felt a bit jarred by the following juxtaposition? In your May 30 edition, Stanley Kauffmann concludes his review ("Seen Twice") with typical generosity of spirit: "[The Human Rights Watch International Film Festival] has played in New York, is moving to Los Angeles and will go on to other cities. Look for it if it comes to your city, which I hope." A few lines below, theater critic Robert Brustein, in "Separated by a Common Playwright," complains about a needless trip to London to review productions that were later to play in New York—"I feel almost sheepish about having flown to London to review them. With a little patience I could have staved home, saving the flight fares and hotel bills, and covered the tours."

Brustein may well have saved his (or TNR's) plane fare, yet those of us from the great outback of America would continue to feel irked at his anachronistic coverage of American theater, which is largely confined to the New York Pub-




lic Theater and a few other New York venues, with occasional Anglophilic junkets to the West End.

Brustein as much as admits that his views are essentially out-of-sync with contemporary American theater, commenting that New York has in many instances become "less a venue for new work than another stop on the road." Would that he might feel a bit "sheepish" about his untimely reviews of new works such as *Angels in America* and Anna Deveare Smith's *South-Central L.A.*, premiered out West long before they could be viewed in the comfort of Brustein's own neighborhood.

Isn't it time Brustein took a few flights westward, rather than to London, in order to have a look at our own country's theater? TNR's readership is not, I hope, confined to the Northeast; neither should its theater coverage be limited to a few venues in a city whose theatrical hegemony is already long on its way to becoming a thing of the past.

DANIEL ATKINSON
*La Jolla, California*

**Robert Brustein replies:**

Apologies for the incorrect article in my review of *The Winter's Tale*. As for Daniel Atkinson, I think he may have missed the irony in my remarks about New York theater, which actually echo his own convictions about the death of New York's "theatrical hegemony." Indeed, it was because of my belief in decentralization that I founded resident theaters in New Haven and in Cambridge. But he is right to complain that I don't get out of the Northeast as often as I once did. That's partly a problem of budget (TNR's), partly of time (mine). I hope to resolve these issues in the future, but the theaters I plan to visit will be those that prepare work for their audiences rather than for New York transfers. Aren't those pre-Broadway premieres Atkinson so proudly trumpets simply another confirmation of New York's "theatrical hegemony"?

## Abuse

**To the editors:**

Talk about the power of suggestion. Adam Minter writes a letter (Correspondence, May 2) in which he encourages your Books & Arts section to cover popular music and presto, in the same issue, TNR includes a column about the late Kurt Cobain and reviews a book subtitled "The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music." I don't think I have to warn smartasses like you about how easily a thing like this can be abused.

ARI BLECH
*Oceanside, New York*

## Divine

**To the editors:**

After reading your descriptions of botched executions, I still was void of sympathy (Notebook, June 6). Perhaps "Divine Intervention" (I'm not religious) decided that easy executions were not sufficient punishment for the horrific crimes of these men. Your sympathies are misplaced.

BONNY LAMB
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.



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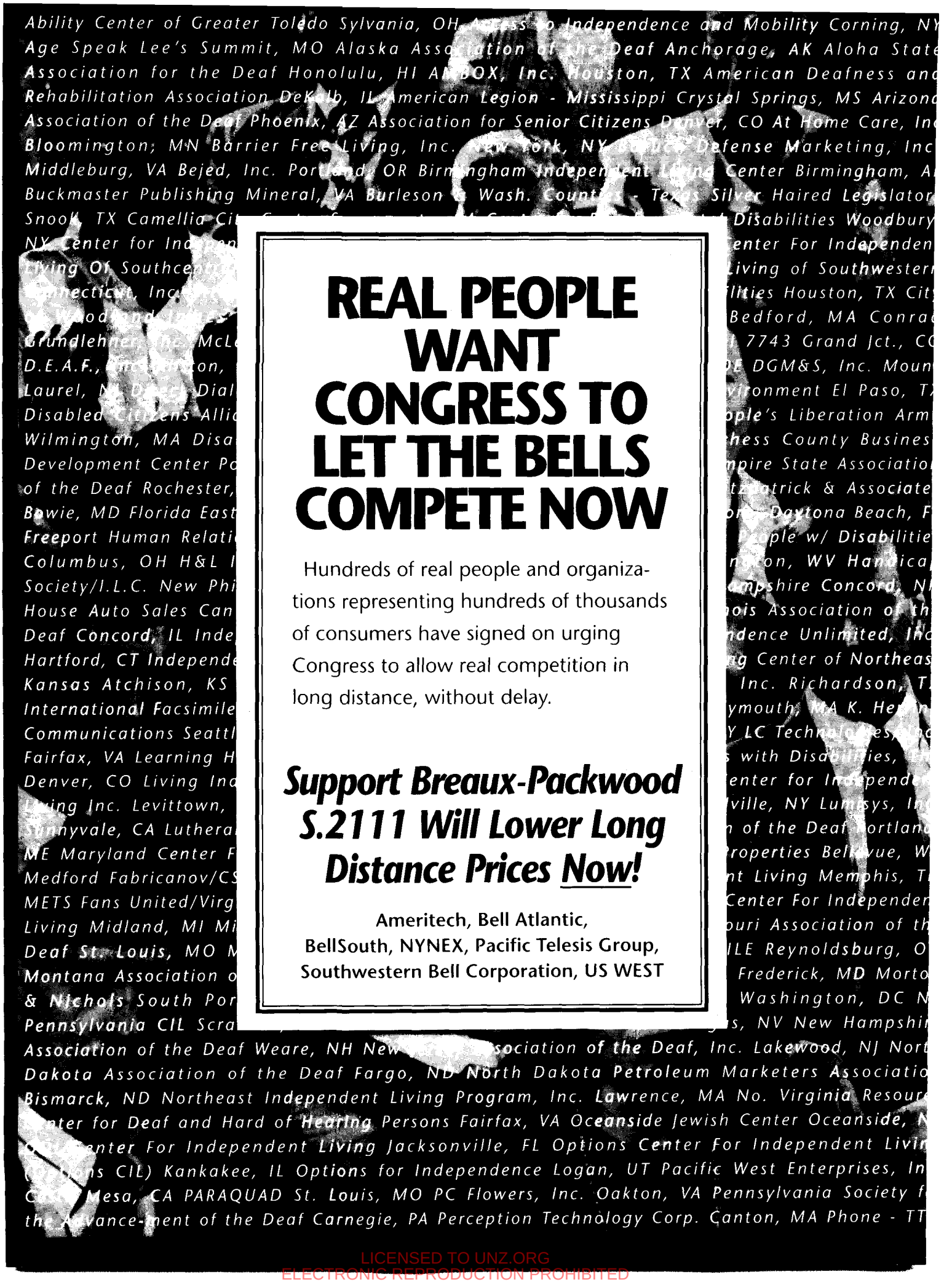
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 27, 1994

# BACK TO HEALTH

It's June 1994, which means the White House and the Congress have been fidgeting over health care reform for more than a year and a half. What have they got to show for it? Democrats and Republicans are seemingly at greater odds on the issue than they were when they began, bickering still and forever over the stultifying arcana of price controls and global budgets and mandates and triggers. None of the five congressional committees at work on the issue has been able to scratch out a single line of realistic legislation. The Memorial Day deadline for movement on the various working proposals came and went, like countless deadlines before it. Not one of the several plans floating around Capitol Hill has wide, or even lukewarm, bipartisan support. Meanwhile, the White House continues to balk at concessions to Republicans and wary Democrats, despite consistent polls that show its labyrinthine plan is extremely unpopular with voters.

It can't go on like this, at least not if President Clinton is serious about passing health care reform this year, as he insists he is. By midsummer the attention of every member of Congress will be occupied by the more urgent problems of re-election. Health care will be eclipsed until after November—which means until next year. Clinton would be foolish to wait it out in the hopes that the Republicans eventually will come around to his position. They won't. Loathe as Hillary Rodham Clinton and Ira Magaziner may be to admit it, the administration's plan is essentially dead. With its national review boards and government-run health alliances, the plan provided rich—and deserved—fodder for Republican stump assaults and insurance industry attack ads. It was a creature of a kind of liberalism that mercifully expired a generation ago. In the America of the 1990s, it's a charming, but crass, anachronism. Congress's reaction to it was a fair simulation of the country's.

The fact is, Clinton probably can't pass a health care bill without engaging his more realistic opponents. His support among paleo-Democrats is not deep enough to attempt a party line vote, as he did with his economic package (which was only passed once it had been saved from its 1960s-style "stimulus package"). Sure, he may be able to cajole enough House Democrats to go along—though even this is dubious now that House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski is out of action—but in the Senate, where the Democratic margin is a skinny six votes, New and Southern Democrats are dug in against a paleoliberal plan.

This, if only he could realize it, is good news for the president. Clinton still retains the initiative as the champion of much-needed reform. Although voters are rightly skeptical of a Magaziner contraption, polls show they want better protection than they have now, and they'll reward Clinton if he can provide it. If the administration can reform basic abuses (such as discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions), ensure portability of health care insurance, extend coverage considerably to many more—but not necessarily all—Americans, and help bring down health care costs, he will have achieved an enormous amount.

Already, compromise measures are popping up. Representatives Michael Bilirakis, a Republican, and Roy Rowland, a Democrat, have proposed a package of reforms that would prevent prohibitions on pre-existing conditions and provide for portability, the concerns most on voters' minds. Democratic Senator John Breaux is circulating a more ambitious compromise. His plan does away with Clinton's employer mandate, allowing the market greater freedom to regulate costs. But there is a built-in safety net—the so-called "hard trigger." If large numbers of people aren't covered under the plan within a few years, the "trigger" goes off, and an employer mandate takes over. And, as always, Representative Jim Cooper's plan, still our favorite, is waiting in the wings.

Any one of these ideas, or a combination of them, might form the platform for a compromise. But as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has pointed out, none of them is worth pursuing with any vigor if Clinton will respond with a veto. He shouldn't. Clinton could deservedly claim credit for even a scaled-back health care bill. Certainly no one believes George Bush would have made it a second-term priority. But Republicans will make the most of it if Clinton walks away empty-handed. It's not a palatable decision, to be sure. But it isn't a difficult one, either. •



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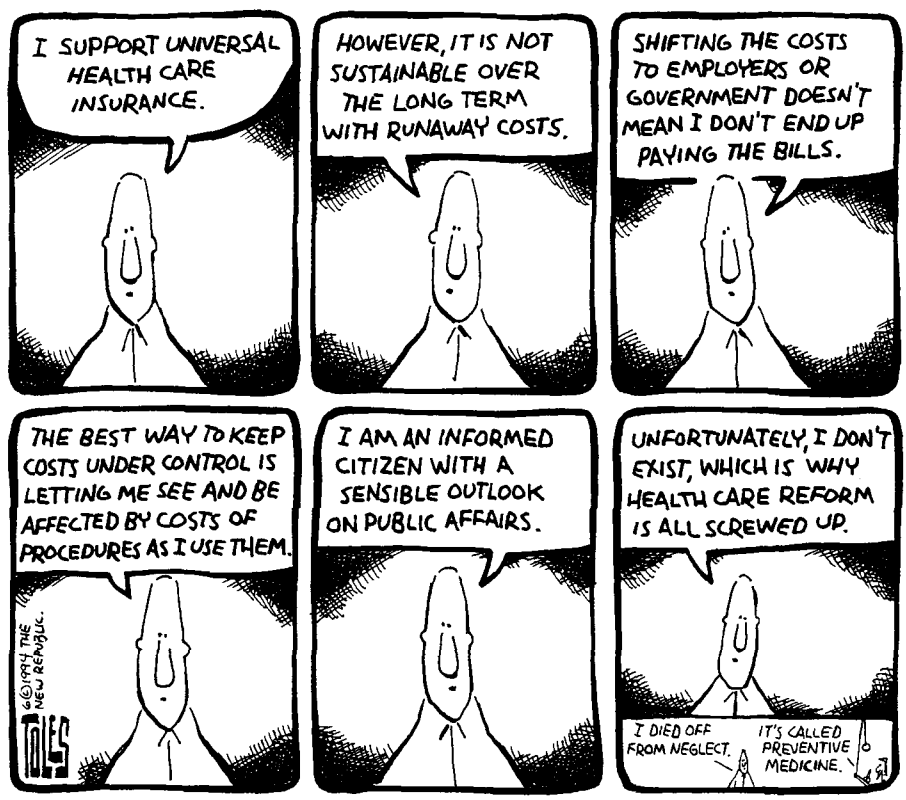
# NOTEBOOK

ADEN AND ABET: The old saw about Germany is fitting for Yemen: we love Yemen so much we want to see two of them instead of just one. There are real stakes in this seemingly incomprehensible fight between North and South Yemen. The country put together out of an impossible union back in 1990 has come apart. Southern Yemen wants to go its own way. What attention Washington can devote to this crisis, what power it can bring to bear, should go into providing South Yemen with the opportunity for a quick exit. Ali Abdullah Salih, the strongman in the north, a bully who hoisted Saddam Hussein's banners during the Gulf war, is no friend of American interests in the region. In fact, the union between the largely tribal north and the secular south was never consummated: the north and south kept separate armies and currencies. The south, with a much smaller demographic base (3 million southerners to 10 million northerners) had settled for the union four years ago after the fall of communism. Marxism, the ideology of the south, had been shown to be a farce; the south, with its free-wheeling port city of Aden, was willing to try anything. For its part the north was eager for dominion, for a large state that would make a bid for power in the affairs of the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf. The north promised the protection of democracy and elections. But no sooner had Yemen been proclaimed an "emerging democracy" by the international community than the south decided it wanted nothing to do with Salih's regime. The elections held to such great fanfare last year backfired. They were, as they were destined to be, a mere cover for dictatorship. The jig was up when the south discovered oil supplies of its own; the north's schemes to get rich off the south's oil didn't encourage unity. The Yemens have fought this war as international wars are fought across borders: there have been aerial attacks against the south; Scud missiles have been fired into the north. The peace of the peninsula secured during Desert Storm was the work of Pax Americana. It was a campaign Salih hectored. He and his fellow travelers in the region would understand, and no doubt grudgingly respect, a just measure of retribution. Our exposure need not be excessive. The states of the Gulf are heavily invested in this fight. We should work with them to undo Salih's design.


I SUPPORT UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE INSURANCE.
HOWEVER, IT IS NOT SUSTAINABLE OVER THE LONG TERM WITH RUNAWAY COSTS.
SHIFTING THE COSTS TO EMPLOYERS OR GOVERNMENT DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T END UP PAYING THE BILLS.
THE BEST WAY TO KEEP COSTS UNDER CONTROL IS LETTING ME SEE AND BE AFFECTED BY COSTS OF PROCEDURES AS I USE THEM.
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TOLES
I AM AN INFORMED CITIZEN WITH A SENSIBLE OUTLOOK ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS.
UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T EXIST, WHICH IS WHY HEALTH CARE REFORM IS ALL SCREWED UP.
I DIED OFF FROM NEGLECT.
IT'S CALLED PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.

HEAVY MEDAL: We were under the impression that flattery in politics is premised on its recognition by the object of the flattery: the sucker-up requires the sucked-up-to. Representative Charles Schumer of Brooklyn, however, has corrected this impression and broken new ground in political ingratiation. According to *Forward*, he is proposing that Congress award a medal to Menachem Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rebbe, who has spent the past season in a coma. It is not lost on the congressman, obviously, that the rebbe's followers are not themselves in a coma, even if they are in transports of messianic delusion about their leader. The rebbe is to be honored for "his ethical and moral contributions," and "for his achievements in world education." This latter encomium is odd, unless you mistake the world for the Jewish world. It may interest the congressman to know that in the Jewish world the rebbe is a figure of great controversy, because the Jewish world has expressed no overpowering need for a Dalai Lama of its own.

HOME NEWS: We're delighted to announce that our poetry editor, Mary Jo Salter, has just published a new book of poems, *Sunday Skaters* (Knopf), and that our reporter-researcher, Hanna Rosin, whose story on the home HIV test appears on page 12, is to become a permanent staff writer. •



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## THE FLAPJACK FILE

# DUCK?

*By Douglas G. McGrath*

*Thursday, May 26*

Just before the foreign policy meeting, Flap got a hankering for a Häagen-Dazs bar, which his wife, the Rod, does not allow the White House kitchen to stock because the president of the company smokes. Mr. Watkins said there was an ice cream vendor across the street in Lafayette Park who sold Häagen-Dazs and that he would go get some for the meeting. Flap said, "Do it!" and Watkins left. "And Woodward says I'm indecisive!" Flap snorted. Five minutes later the chopper landed and Mr. Watkins was back. Flap said the taxpayers shouldn't pay for this and Mr. Watkins agreed. The ice cream was his treat.

Before distributing the bars, Mr. Steph took Mr. Watkins aside. "Secretary Christopher is speaking first," he said meaningfully. Mr. Watkins nodded and they rolled the bars in No-Dōz. While this gave the ice cream a slight bitterness, it was more humane than the usual prep for Mr. Chris, which involves wiring all those cushions for shocks.

The Daily Foreign Policy Meeting was followed by the How to Improve the Daily Foreign Policy Meeting Meeting. They decided one way would be for everyone to stop curling their first two fingers in the air in the shape of quotation marks every time they said the president's "foreign policy." This meeting was followed by a meeting in answer to charges in Mr. Woodward's book. It is called The Bi-Daily Meeting on How to Reduce the Number of Daily Meetings.

*Friday, May 27*

Slow day. Mr. Watkins's blow-drier broke, so he took the helicopter up and flew around till his hair dried.

*Tuesday, May 31*

More D-Day prep. Flap had a salutatorial where he rehearsed saluting. The coach's name is Baz, and Flap got him from Richard Gere, who had studied with him for *An Officer and a Gentleman*. "You know a lot of chicks say I look like Richard Gere," Flap said to Baz. Baz raised his eyebrows and Flap coughed sheepishly. "Well, mostly my hair." Baz worked with him for a long time, but it was tough: "Keep the wrist firm—no, you're flapping! Firmer and—Mr. President, please! I don't know how many times I can tell you this! It just doesn't look like a salute if you lick your fingers when your hand goes past your mouth!"

Then Flap and his aides had a tutorial on D-Day with the historians Stephen Ambrose, Paul Fussell and John Keegan. They started by watching footage of G.I.s fighting their way through bullets and bombs up Omaha Beach. Mr. Fussell asked if anyone knew what the "D" in D-Day stood for. "Duck?" Flap asked. I'm not sure, but I think Mr. Ambrose choked on his coffee. Mr. Keegan then asked if anyone had questions. Flap raised his hand right away; he always loves it when things seem like school. Here were his questions: "With England being bombed, Oxford was probably risky for conscientious young American men—what other colleges were available? When they landed at Normandy, when was the first meal scheduled? Does anyone know Marlene Dietrich's measurements?" Flap turned to his senior advisers and said, "Y'all got any questions?" Someone from the NSC—I can't remember his name, but he wears the two little silver earrings in his lip—said, "So without, like, Walkmans, what did people listen to while they hung out?"

*Thursday, June 2* ITALY

Rome has been fun. It is a religious city, of course, especially for Mr. Steph. He went to the Armani superstore and we haven't seen him since. Flap and the Rod met the Pope, who invited them to mass. The Rod said that sounded lovely and that she would lead the service. The Pope said she would not. She said, "Don't be so patriarchal!" I had never seen a pope's eyes pop before. The Pope said, "And what will *I* do?" Flap looked at him sympathetically and said, "You like crosswords?"

Flap very testy with press badgering him about his military service. "Hey!" he snapped. "When England was about to fall, President Reagan spent the war in Hollywood. Y'all never hammered him on that. But where did I go as soon as I was called? Straight to England!"

But he was happy at dinner because he was seated next to the prime minister's wife, a knockout named Veronica Lario. She explained that Lario was the name of a lake. "Tell you what, bella mama," Flap said, "if you're interested in nature, maybe you'd like to ride in my limo. I got astroturf all over the floors!" The Rod must have overheard because later that night I overheard her yelling, "The only lake you'll get near while I'm alive is Tony!"

*Thursday, June 10* THE WHITE HOUSE

I'm in protection, not politics, so I'm no judge, but I thought Flap's D-Day speech was sweet: "The boys of D-Day were our uncles and fathers and, knowing my father, a good chunk were my half-brothers.... We thank the men and women whose bravery made the world free for managed competition, regional alliances and a really good deal on dental."

Back in D.C., there was a message from Mr. Watkins saying he had a check to pay for the controversial use of the helicopter. "This just shows that even though we make mistakes, our administration learns," Flap said happily. "Little George, go get the check and let's show the public we're quick to correct our mistakes. Use the chopper!"

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a frequent TNR contributor.



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**AIDS activists vs. the HIV home test.**

# BAD BLOOD

*By Hanna Rosin*

There's good news on the AIDS front. In a few months it might be possible to buy an HIV home test kit, for about $30, at any pharmacy. The kit, called Comfort, was created by New Jersey-based Direct Access Diagnostics, a subsidiary of pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson. It comes in a blue cardboard package about the size of a C.D. box, with an AIDS information pamphlet written by former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop as well as instructions in Spanish and English. Here's how it works: you prick your finger with a lancet, press a drop of blood on three small circles on a square of filter paper, tear off the square and mail it to a designated lab. The sample, which has an I.D. number printed on it, is analyzed the same way clinic tests are analyzed and has the same level of reliability. In seven days you call a toll-free number and punch in your I.D. number. If your test is negative, a recording announces the results and offers you some AIDS prevention information. If your test is positive, a trained counselor comes on the line to answer questions and refer you to the nearest clinic.

You'd think AIDS activists would be thrilled. Well, not exactly. "Lives will be destroyed, literally and figuratively," says Chris Portelli, a spokesman for the National Alliance of Lesbian and Gay Health Clinics (NALGHC), which has urged the Food and Drug Administration to reject the test. "The potential for catastrophic impact ... far outweighs the intended advantages." Nightmare scenarios abound. Dr. Larry Kessler of the Fenway Community Health Center in Boston imagines "teenagers shoplifting the tests and playing with them at a party, forcing people to get tested."

What's going on here? Their biggest worry is that impersonal phone counseling could cause suicides and panic. "To allow results to be given without the support necessary to sustain the news is unethical in the extreme," says Laura Hardesty of Chase Brexton Clinic in Baltimore, Maryland. To prove the point, activists at the NALGHC press conference handed out an obituary of a man who had jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge after learning he was HIV-positive, a situation they claimed only "therapists on the front line" could prevent.

But an overburdened clinic system means many people already receive no counseling. In the most recent Centers for Disease Control AIDS survey, 31 percent of people who had been tested reported receiving results by phone or mail, and 69 percent received no post-test counseling at all. Even when they do, the quality is uneven. According to the minutes of a recent CDC advisory committee meeting, CDC officials believe their national counseling program, which funds most local clinics, "is not being implemented as designed and is not working effectively" and that individual programs "have no clue as to the meaning of counseling." By contrast, the home test's counselors are trained professionals guided by a computer program developed by Thom Moseley, former manager of the AIDS hotline in L.A. "It's as bulletproof as any system," says Martin Delaney, director of the AIDS information group Project Inform, who has studied the computer script. "Our experience is a lot of people who won't talk about it face to face will talk on the phone."

In other words, a home test could greatly increase the number of people who know their HIV status. In the CDC AIDS survey, 25 percent of adults said they would use the test—three times the number who said they would use existing options. More important, 50 percent of respondents who have a high risk of having HIV said they would use the home test. So did 30 percent of those who chose not to get their most recent test results. Even if people preferred to get tested the old-fashioned way, clinics couldn't handle the business. Of the estimated 1 million Americans who are HIV-positive, only about half have been tested. Without other alternatives, government clinics can expect 5 million at their door in 1994—twice the number in 1993. There's already a two- to six-week wait for an appointment at most clinics and a one- to four-week wait for results. And many people don't wait. Sixty percent of visitors to STD clinics, which contribute about one-fourth of known positives, don't return for their results. At HIV counseling sites, which contribute one-third of known positives, 20 percent don't return.

It's hard to avoid the impression that the reason many clinics oppose home testing is that they have a financial stake in keeping their monopoly. Although AIDS tests are free, the government pays clinics to perform them. Most states pay local clinics a flat rate of $35 to $50 per test. A recent CDC audit found that the L.A. County AIDS testing program, which received a federal grant of $4.4 million in 1993, had a per-test cost of $77 to $300. How well-spent is the money? The L.A. program produced only a 1.3 percent rate of positives last year—even though the county has the nation's second-highest rate of HIV infection.

AIDS activists counter that the home test is O.K. for middle-class whites, but will mean little to the minorities who are most at risk for HIV. "They'll capitalize by marketing to white middle-class fears, not to minorities or drug users in the inner city, where it's needed," says Dennis Ouellet of the L.A. Free Clinic. Portelli, of the NALGHC, complains that the home test does "a great disservice to the [Hispanic] community," that only the clinics' "record of care ... has transcended cultural and linguistic barriers."

Perhaps. But minorities—who have the nation's



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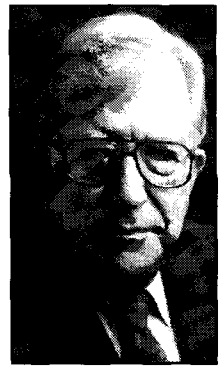
# Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

## Striking a Good Bargain

When a school district contracts with a for-profit company to build a new gymnasium, it's relatively easy to make sure the district gets what it pays for. But when it considers hiring a for-profit company to manage schools and improve student achievement, as a number are now doing, it's a different story. Assessing the quality of this kind of service is very tough, especially since there is little experience to go on—Baltimore is the only district that has purchased this kind of service. What kinds of questions should school districts be asking if they want to improve their schools instead of being taken for a ride? Based on Baltimore's experience with Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI), here are some issues that need to be raised.



What questions should school districts be asking if they want to improve their schools instead of being taken for a ride?

*Shouldn't some or all of a company's profits be dependent on making specified improvements in student achievement?* EAI came to Baltimore promising that student achievement would shoot up—exactly what is needed in a school district where so many kids are doing so poorly. That hasn't happened. So far, according to the school district's own data, test scores have fallen in EAI schools even though they have gone up in other Baltimore schools. However, the district was not smart enough to insist on having the promise to improve student achievement written into the contract. So EAI could stay in Baltimore for five or six more years, make millions of dollars in profits and leave its schools performing more poorly than when it arrived. No matter how little the company accomplishes, it will still make money—and Baltimore and its kids will have to be satisfied with whatever they get.

*Shouldn't there be a limit to the money the company can take out of the system?* In Baltimore, EAI said it would make its profit by cutting bureaucratic waste. However, the contract set no limit to the company's profits, so EAI is free to extract as much as it can from the system. EAI has already made substantial cuts in classroom expenditures—without cutting the central bureaucracy. It has raised class size; it has gotten rid of special education classes and dumped children with disabilities into regular classrooms without the support services they need; and it has fired paraprofessionals and brought in $7-an-hour interns who get no benefits. If the school board had negotiated a contract that committed EAI to raising student performance, the company would have had a strong incentive to improve the quality of instruction instead of making cuts that can only damage it. Or if the school board had negotiated a ceiling on the company's profits, that, too, would have removed the incentive to squeeze as much as possible out of the system. As it is, EAI's contract with Baltimore is a license to rape the school system.

*Shouldn't there be some formal mechanism for establishing that the company is living up to its promises?* In theory, the school board and the superintendent are the watchdogs for the public. Like the homeowner who follows the contractor around to make sure that the lighting fixtures are the ones agreed to, they are supposed to make sure that the company lives up to its end of the bargain. But what happens if the school board and the superintendent don't do this? What if they say to themselves, "I've brought this company in, and if it bombs, what will happen to my credibility?" That's the situation in Baltimore, and it's so bad that if you heard the superintendent at a public meeting, you'd swear he was a salesman for EAI instead of the person who is supposed to be watching the store.

There is a better way for a school district to make sure that a school management firm lives up to its promises: Write provisions into the contract for a formal assessment by an independent third party with real expertise in schools.

When school districts hire for-profit firms to supply them with most kinds of goods and services, they pay careful attention to the company's track record. But none of the for-profit school management outfits currently operating has any track record. EAI, the oldest, has managed nine public schools for just three years in Baltimore; the Edison Project, which is looking for business right now, has never managed any. When they talk about what they can do for a school system, that's exactly what it is—talk. They have nothing to back it up.

Maybe, over time, these companies and others that enter the field will develop expertise through trial and error. Right now, they will be learning on the job. Of course, school management firms have a right to do this, but school districts have a responsibility to protect themselves, their students and the public. I don't see a lot of evidence that they're doing it.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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fastest-growing HIV infection rate—back the test. In the CDC survey, 35 percent of African Americans and 30 percent of nonwhites, who are mostly Latinos, said they would use the test. The National Minority AIDS Council is "leaning in favor of the test," says President Paul Kawata, while the National Council of La Raza wrote to the FDA arguing that Hispanics, who have twice the percentage of AIDS cases of any population, are "uncomfortable visiting existing testing facilities," and would prefer the home test.

On June 22 an FDA advisory committee will meet in Washington to decide what to do about home testing. It will evaluate the clinical trials and hear from the public. The NALGHC plans to bring an army of expert therapists opposing the test. Meanwhile, another company has applied for approval of a test that can be analyzed at home, and a second is developing a saliva test. It will be another classic battle of the HIV epidemic, a battle between a fear of innovation and the chance to save lives. "Changes are inevitable," says Donald Francis, a former CDC AIDS researcher. "The bottom line is this is a huge epidemic and we are sleeping. It's this desire not to know which breeds the epidemic." •

## Are White House reporters rats?

# CRY SHAME

*By Martha Gellhorn*

Franklin Roosevelt, dead for nearly half a century, is revered as one of America's few great presidents. You have to be very old to remember that between his inauguration in 1933 and our entry into World War II, FDR was steadily vilified in the Republican press, its serious and scurrilous branches alike. The New Deal was a rescue operation based on the principle of social justice. The Republican Party, home of Big Business, Big Money and conservatives of every stripe, hated and feared New Deal policies and the man who personified them. "Rosenveldt the Red" is something I dredge from my memory: a Jew, of course, which made it worse.

Mrs. Roosevelt was even more viciously attacked. Her noble and stubborn concern for the have-nots, the causes she sponsored, her travels around the country, her column and her press conferences were all execrated. Who did she think she was, this multi-meddler? "Nigger lover" is another tidbit lodged in my memory. The famous columnist Westbrook Pegler made it his major work to insult Mrs. Roosevelt. He even mocked her appearance. Eleanor Roosevelt is now honored as unique in American public life.

There was no T.V., and radios cost too much for the mass of Americans. Apart from newsreels, the print press had almost a complete monopoly on informing the country. Newspapers sold for pennies. But whether they admired or loathed the Roosevelts and the New Deal, none of the press snooped in the private affairs of the president and his wife. The Roosevelts were impervious to assault. Effortlessly, as I remember, Mr. Roosevelt was elected four times and lived to serve for twelve years—a record in American history.

Nine presidents have come and gone since Franklin Roosevelt died. None was subjected to public scrutiny of his personal life. These nine men were elected to hold the nation's highest office; the voters' choice and the dignity of the position guaranteed their personal privacy. They were not nine saints. In our long, imperfect political story, no acting president has ever been beset by a rat pack chewing on his private life. Repeat: never before.

It is not enough to defame President Clinton; for a really good job, his wife must also be discredited. The true scandal in America is the spectacle of the rat-biters at work.

The duty of a responsible press is to discover, *verify* and report facts about the management or mismanagement of public business. The political actions of any president are rightly fair game for censure. (In my opinion, the politics of the former nine presidents were not criticized nearly enough.) The irresponsible press has no duty whatsoever and accepts no tiresome obligation for accuracy. It aims only to get what it wants. Apparently the irresponsible press is in control in the United States now. What it fiercely wants is to demolish the Clinton administration. The means to this end is character assassination.

You could see this unprecedented onslaught as a tribute to the Clinton policies; too many important toes will be crushed by Clinton's planned reforms. (The gun industry is in pain due to the first ever, though mild, federal law against guns in a country diseased by them.) The Clinton enemies are numerous and easy to locate and understand. But where are those who should be the Clinton friends? Where are those who ought to be asking the pertinent questions in his defense, upholding his necessary reforms, praising what this young president has already accomplished? Where, for God's sake, is the responsible press?

I have been a journalist for sixty-four years and regard the honest practice of journalism as vital to a decent society. Now, I am ashamed of the serious press that I respected: ashamed of its silence, ashamed of its thoughtless aid to the rat-biters. Why is it giving print and air space to unproved accusations? Doesn't it see that this campaign to degrade the president and his wife degrades America in the outside world? And why should the defamation offensive ever stop, while the responsible press sits idly by? Strange accusers from the past can be dug up for years.

Why wasn't the responsible press in there from the beginning to fulfill its absolute duty: discover, *verify* and



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politicians that it won't cost so much after all to house the homeless—but this is not an argument Jencks makes.) How, then, does he, or anyone who wants to replace political numbers with scientific numbers, motivate a political response? He must know that his relatively small numbers might well be used to justify complacency. Such ambivalence pervades the book.

When big numbers aren't available to motivate political action, and even when they are, blame is a very good vehicle. Thus, in virtually every social policy issue, there is a struggle over whether to blame the victims themselves for their predicament or to blame somebody or something else. Are people homeless because they made bad choices or should we blame politicians, policies, programs and impersonal economic forces? Obviously, how we answer these questions will determine what we think we ought to do to alleviate homelessness, so these are more than academic exercises.

Every social scientist knows that to argue for individual behavior as the central cause of a social problem is to undermine support for political action. Jencks, Liebow and most social scientists think homelessness has both individual and structural causes. Jencks is more likely to see individual choice and character as causal factors in homelessness. Liebow, while not denying agency to homeless women, is more attentive to the ways in which poor women are genuinely powerless and therefore less likely to perceive and have real choices.

Here the two books illustrate another aspect of the great divide in contemporary social science. On one side are those who think there is a more or less universal rationality to the human psyche. We can explain and predict people's behavior by comparing their decisions to a universal standard of rationality, and we can find that standard by looking inside ourselves at how we think. On the other side are those who believe that power structures shape whether, and to what degree, people conceive of their lives in terms of decisions, and who believe that to understand anyone's internal thought processes, we need to look inside their particular situations.

Jencks occasionally infers individual preferences and values from aggregate data, such as figures on where people sleep, a kind of inference that depends on an assumption of universal rationality. Liebow assumes that what might appear irrational or capricious to a well-housed middle-class person might be quite rational for a homeless woman, if only we could see all the parameters of her choice. Many women are homeless, he thinks, precisely because women are the weakest members of working- and lower-class families and the most likely to be pushed out when conditions get rough. Even more striking, Liebow says that many homeless people simply cannot and do not order their lives around decisions: "You can't decide what to do [when you leave the shelter in the morning] because it doesn't matter what you do. You're not needed anywhere, not wanted anywhere and not expected anywhere. Nobody cares what you do."

While assessing the contributions of crack addiction to the problem of homelessness, Jencks constructs this purely economic portrait of a homeless person's choice:

> A bed in a New York or Chicago cubicle hotel currently costs about $8 a night. Most people who have enough money to buy substantial amounts of crack could therefore afford to rent a cubicle instead. A large fraction of the single adults in the New York shelters who test positive for cocaine presumably think that a crack high, however brief, is worth more than a scuzzy cubicle.

That is a big presumption about how homeless people think, and Jencks can make it only by first narrowing the homeless person's needs and alternatives to a roof and some crack.


Richard Pipes

RUSSIA UNDER THE BOLSHEVIK REGIME

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Almost any three pages from Liebow's book speak to the wrongness of Jencks's reduction. One of the central problems for single homeless women is storage—where to keep their belongings. Some of their belongings are mementos from the past, like photos or letters, that keep a woman connected to family, personal history and her own sense of who she is. Other belongings are things that will be useful in the future when she becomes a homemaker once again—things like pots and pans and linens—and these things, utterly useless now, sustain a woman's hopes and ambitions for escaping homelessness. Liebow's acquaintances sometimes pay $50 to $150 per month for storage, and are often preoccupied with raising the cash to meet these bills, as well as finding places for their belongings when they can no longer pay for commercial storage. It is as if these women, lacking a home for themselves, devote their energies to making a home for their possessions instead.

Storage, so central to homeless people's life choices, doesn't figure in Jencks's calculus. He doesn't even seem to know it's in their budgets, though his failure to account for the importance of storage is puzzling since Liebow's book is one of those he reviewed for *The New York Review of Books*. Finding out what is in people's mental and real budgets is something a social scientist ought to do before constructing a picture of their choices and making inferences about their values from observations of their behavior. Jencks is right when he says that what people are willing to spend on rent depends on "how much they value shelter relative to other things and how adept they are at getting other things free." But he goes astray when he includes among "other things" only the things a middle-class person can imagine homeless people worrying about: food, clothing, medical care, transportation and stimulants. What if they crave some belongings and a place to store them?

Liebow tells of a woman who wouldn't accept a higher-paying job because her current employer allowed her to store her things in the workplace attic. The new job would have paid enough so that she could easily afford commercial storage, but she wouldn't have had ready access to her belongings. He tells of shelter residents who treat themselves to a night in a motel and a bottle of wine once a month. Such expenditures might seem foolhardy and shortsighted to us, but, Liebow notes, if your wages are so small you can't hope to save enough to move out, it doesn't much matter how you spend your money.

Jencks is quite sure that "a significant proportion of today's homeless will spend any additional cash they receive on drugs and alcohol." He says he has no idea how many homeless receive their drugs for free or in exchange for menial labor, and he says we badly need more reliable information on how the homeless get their money and spend it. But the only way to get that information is to "spend endless hours with the homeless," and that is "disagreeable" and only for the "adventurous." We can certainly respect anybody's choice not to do field research with the homeless, but we must also be on guard for stereotyped conclusions that result from a deliberate decision to exclude certain forms of knowledge.

A prominent feature of the rational-choice brand of social science is its predilection for casting all life experiences as choices. If people are free to choose, they can also be held to account for the results of their choices. Without leaning explicitly on these underlying assumptions about choice, Jencks nevertheless uses them. One of his major arguments is that the decline of marriage played a major role in the increase of homelessness among women and children in the 1980s. "It is the fact that unskilled women not only married less but continued to have children that pushed more of them in the streets." This subtle formulation of women's agency in causing homelessness—their decisions not to marry yet to have children—is more explicit in *The New York Review of Books* version:

> Few unskilled women can earn enough to support a family on their own. For many, therefore, the choices are stark. They could work, refrain from having children and barely avoid poverty, or they could not work, have children, collect welfare and live in extreme poverty. Many became mothers even though this meant extreme poverty.

Do women themselves really view their worlds and their lives this way? Liebow's portrait of women's relationships to their families, especially to their children, suggests otherwise. Having children seems to be a form of wealth, something that gives richness to a woman's life no matter how down and out she is. For homeless women with children, ties to their kids are their most intense relationships, their most preoccupying concerns and their major motivation for finding a permanent place to live. Young or grown, nearby or far away, dead or alive, children are so powerful in mothers' emotional lives that Liebow refers to them as family "ghosts."

With some sense of the emotional meaning of children to women, it is harder to imagine that unskilled women, any more than other women, contemplate their futures as such a stark choice between economic well-being and having children. For most women, poor or rich, having children is not so much a decision as something you do in life. Women of any economic class no doubt bring many considerations into their thoughts about having children, but few probably perceive the whole enterprise as quite the cost-benefit calculus that Jencks suggests. Framing childbearing by unskilled women as a conscious trade-off with economic well-being verges on casting homeless women as makers of their own cots.

Though Liebow did not set out to write a call to political action, his book illustrates another form such calls can take. Without numbers, without crisis-mongering, without blame-heaping, simple description can draw people in and rouse their passions. Liebow's descriptions are not undigested; they are sorted and packaged to answer questions about homelessness and to reveal both individual experience and the operation of the homelessness "system." But how to get from description to prescription? Liebow's call to action in the last chapter is at once more grounded in the reality of homeless people's everyday lives and yet more vague and underdeveloped. Designing policy is not what ethnographers do, but still one wishes Liebow had been matched with a designer who could translate his thick knowledge into a list of concrete dos and don'ts. For example, how might we provide storage facilities in a way that gives homeless people access to their belongings without depleting their potential savings and without locking them in low-paying jobs?

Not surprisingly, both books call for housing as the most important first step. Both would improve the quality of shelters as a temporary solution to the lack of affordable housing. While Jencks is not optimistic that shelters can be made orderly, safe and still attractive to users, Liebow thinks shelters can work well if we learn from the users what qualities make shelters more habitable. The women he studied had definite preferences, and generally favored one shelter that gave them most privacy. Privacy, in turn, was not so much a matter of separate space, but rather, a matter of how many questions the staff asked of residents and whether they "let you alone." Based on the shelters and women he observed, he believes shelters provided by nonprofit agencies are much more likely to be acceptable than



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report facts? I cannot assume that those in the press are all closet Republicans; I fear that the responsible press has become morally careless. And I don't know what I feel most: disgust or anger. I know that I feel betrayed by my own profession.

In 1947, after ten years of working abroad, I returned to America to live and settled in Washington, D.C. Unknowingly, I rented the house of Helen Gahagan Douglas, the liberal Democratic congresswoman who had just been defeated by Richard Nixon in his first smear campaign. He flooded their district with fliers printed on pink paper; not daring to call Douglas a Communist, he branded her a "pinko." In the early days of the American Dark Age that was enough to finish her.

I wanted to see the workings of government and wandered, with a dozen other casual sightseers, into a hearing of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Perhaps it was the only caucus room in use that day. A sick-faced prosecutor snarled, shouted and entrapped a small fat German composer who earned his living by writing movie music in Hollywood. His heinous crime was that he had joined the German Communist Party in 1926, though he forgot to pay his dues or attend a meeting. A young musician, not attuned to politics, he drifted away from his brief impulse to protest the rise of fascism in his country. The German stood blinking and dazed under the glare of camera lights, clearly harmless, clearly confused by this counterfeit trial in a language he spoke badly.

Four congressmen gloated at a long table behind the prosecutor, vultures on chairs. After enough toying with their prey, the chairman declared that the pudgy German was a member of the Comintern, although no one could say what he had been doing in this unlikely implied role. The House Committee on Un-American Activities never proved criminal or treasonable acts by anyone. It was enough to be called before those congressmen to have your career and your life ruined. Murder by insinuation.

To me, this ugly performance looked like a cheap copy of the People's Courts of Nazi Germany. I wrote a piece then for THE NEW REPUBLIC called "Cry Shame," being sick with shame for a government, a responsible press, a citizenry that would tolerate the existence of that committee. This was not the America I grew up in. This was not the America I was so proud of during the Roosevelt era. After four more months of watching the Un-Americans and foreseeing what their reign of terror would do to American life, I decided that I did not want to live in such a country, and left.

In a different context and for different purposes, this same process is now being used against President Clinton and his wife. Trial by denunciation. Sentence by slander.

From 1934 through the rest of their lives, I knew President and Mrs. Roosevelt as friends. They were naturally at home in the White House; their innate elegance of manner made the later imperial pomp and frippery needless. They were experienced and wise and securely rooted by birth in American society. They were easy to talk to, open to any disinterested news and views brought to them. They were inspiring because of their genuine compassion and their belief that social justice was the rightful goal of leadership. President Roosevelt inherited the economic and social morass of the Great Depression. With the constant aid of his wife, he was determined to lift America into a new climate, a hopeful, generous climate, to the benefit of the whole people. Their commitment was all.

For the first time in forty-nine years I believe that we have a president and his wife who are the spiritual heirs of the Roosevelts. The Clintons are young; they cannot yet compare to the Roosevelts in experience and wisdom. But they have the same aims as the Roosevelts, the same sense of duty to all the people, the same kind of vision for America. President Clinton inherited a nation in deep social disarray and an economy endangered by a colossal public debt. I thought, with joy, that here was a man, helped by a brilliant, principled wife, who had the brain, the courage and the will to change America, to set it again on a long-lost path.

It is heartbreaking that this promise should be dimmed by a band of mean little minds. It is unforgivable that the serious press has not recognized this promise, this chance for the country, and stood behind the Clintons. I keep hoping for a grass-roots groundswell of outrage at the tactics of the Clinton enemies. I keep hoping for a latter-day Ed Murrow, who took on Senator Joe McCarthy, to take on this malignant campaign against the Clintons. And who knows, that just might actually happen.

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**The American mating game in Russia.**

# BRIDE AND SEEK

*By Liesl Schillinger*

A few weeks ago, at the Amerikansky Bar and Grill in Moscow, my British friend Tim and I were slugging back Tuborgs, watching a memorial to Jackie O. on CNN and waiting the hour and a half it takes for a table to open up. As we shouted to each other over the clamor of voices, Russian and foreign, I commented on how wealthy the Russian crowd seemed and observed that most of the Russian women seemed to have Russian dates. Now that there are plenty of successful Russian men, I asked Tim, are Western men like him being ignored? "Ignored?" Tim said in dis-



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belief. "Ignored? Do you see how exhausted I look?" The night before he had been awakened by a loud knocking on his hotel room door. It was a prostitute, and she demanded to be let in to ply her trade. "It was all I could do to kick her out," Tim said. "I went back to sleep and an hour later someone knocked at the door again. They pay the doormen a bribe to be let in." Tim said such nocturnal disruptions are not unusual. "This is not flattery," he complained. "This is sexual harassment."

Another friend, David, told of how he would be at a dance club, talking with a gorgeous Russian woman who was nice, young, funny and interesting. He would just be thinking he had found a potential girlfriend when she would break off the conversation and say, "So, how much?" "I've found the whole thing pretty depressing," he said. "Now I mostly look for girlfriends in the expatriate community." But then, another American friend, Mike, recently married a Russian girl and shows every sign of bliss. In the face of the femininity and charm of young Russian women, the secret wish of many American men in Russia today is to beat the odds and end up like Mike, with a Russian bride who loves him more than she loves his passport.

Last month, a planeload of American men arrived in Moscow with the sole intent of finding Russian brides. They came prepared with lists of compatibility criteria, notes on the emotional make-up of the Russian Woman and even engagement rings. They were led by a Californian named Steve Young, who recently abandoned his career as an airline pilot to lead a bride-seeking group called the European Connection. A handsome man with a squarish face, wire-rimmed glasses and chestnut hair, Young is convinced that Russia is the last preserve of romance. "The women here are very much family-oriented, and when they love and care, they don't hide it," he said. "The men who come on these trips are tired of the American dating scene. They are mostly divorced and they are realistic. They know the girls are looking for men to marry them and take care of them, and that's fine by them." Of the forty-three men who came over on the first European Connection expedition late last year, twenty, by Young's reckoning, returned to America engaged.

I met Young and his band of twenty-three lonely hearts at the Karo nightclub on Pushkin Square. The men (average age: 41) had paid $2,700 for the ten-day trip, which included airfare, hotel, nightly "socials," interpreters and introductions to some 300 Russian women, many of whom had been featured in the European Connection's glossy catalogs. The men approached the business of meeting women the same way they might tackle a corporate takeover. "When you meet them, it's like a job interview," a divorced 47-year-old Asian American man from the Midwest told me. "We're supposed to meet as many of them as possible and ask them a lot of questions, so that we find the one who is most compatible." Ron, a 45-year-old businessman from South Carolina, explained, "You gotta stay in focus. You can't jump to the first beautiful girl. There are 300 girls and your head's spinning. They're more intelligent than American girls and there's just a glow about 'em. You meet a lot of them, and if you like them, you get their numbers, and if you like one a lot, then you're supposed to ask her to come back on the bus after the social for dinner at our hotel. You pay for her dinner, and if you get along really well, you might have her to dinner the next day, too." Ron, who is divorced, had come to Russia equipped with a half-carat diamond engagement ring, which he was prepared to give to the *krasavitsa* of his dreams. "I decided to do this two months ago," he said. "When I leave here, someone's gonna have a ring on her finger." Ron has already found someone he wants to marry, and is bitter about the troubles he had trying to arrange a fiancée visa for her. "The American Embassy is being an asshole about this," he said. "They should figure out that this is the best thing in the world that could happen. If there's ever gonna be world peace, this is how."

As Ron entertained a young, ginger-haired Russian with a magic trick, turning a penny into a ruble coin on the back of her hand, Young went up to the dance floor and took the mike. "This is the last Russian Connection social," he announced. Women stirred their drinks at the pink-clothed tables, which were decorated with silver bud vases, one rose per. "This next dance will be a ladies' choice, what you call a *byely tanets*, white dance," he said, and as he finished, a pretty woman with a black push-up bustier took the microphone and translated. The Russian girls rose from their seats and began looking for the most promising partners. "See that man?" a Russian named Natasha whispered to me before she joined the hunt. "They say he is a very important French diplomat." She pointed to a man of 60 or so, who was already dancing nervously with a lithe young blond.

The disco was modern and trig—the walls were painted with navy and aqua waves, and curious porcelain-headed clowns hung from them at odd angles. A heavy house beat began pounding and disco lights started streaming around the walls and before long twenty incongruous couples had taken the dance floor. A gray-haired man, his face contorted in a grimace, had been chosen by a 20-year-old in a leopard print; a thin and lovely redhead in a frilled shirt bounced frenetically across from an American in naval rig; and everywhere *devushki* of every stripe cavorted alongside men who looked like their dancing days were over.

At my table, I talked to a 21-year-old accountant named Katya. Katya was lovely, very put-together, with a blond bob, short skirt and white blouse. "I heard about this social from a girlfriend," she told me, "and I came because I want to find a husband. I don't care if he's American—I guess he could be European—but I'm looking for a man who's successful and not Russian. I can't meet a good husband in our country, because the men here are not serious. I heard that American men don't like to marry American women because they're very emancipated. We are more domestic, I think. I don't know American women, so maybe I am wrong, but I think maybe they are crazy. Because, first of all for me is to have children and a good husband, and second of



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all is maybe to have a good business. I think family is most important, not work, because how can you work if you are not happy and how can a woman be happy if she does not have a nice family life?" Katya's 22-year-old friend, Natalya, said, "If I meet someone I like, I would marry him. Of course, a few days is not enough to know someone well, but you can go to America and get to know them better there."

Katya and Natalya are exactly the kind of women most of the men are looking for, and the men do not look too deeply into their motives; after all, they have motives of their own. Seated by his red-haired beauty, the man in the naval uniform said, "I'm 40 years old, and I'm looking for a woman of childbearing age. I want to get married and start a family, and I think the women here are all receptive to that. I'm like a kid in a candy shop."

The men are hopeful, the women are hopeful—but what are they both hoping for? For some of the women, the goal of the European Connection party is not marriage but simply to dabble in international romance. Not every Russian woman thinks Russia, or at least Moscow, is so awful these days; even the sincerest of the women may balk at the final necessity of leaving her country. In the past eight months, since the successful suppression of the October insurgency, capitalism has taken hold in Russia's cities. Muscovites will tell you that Moscow has more new Mercedes than any other city in the world, more Russians have more money than ever before and Russian men and women have launched tens of thousands of businesses in the last six months alone. Today, the best stores in Moscow cater not to the foreign community but to the new rich Russians. At a streamlined furniture store on the New Arbat, where a child's melamite bunk bed goes for $1,000, a sofa set for $1,400, a salesman told me, "We opened at the end of April and our business is fantastic. People come in here, Russians, and point to something and say, 'That looks good, I'll take two.' And they don't even ask the price." Nearby, open-air cafés not patronized by the foreign community offer caviar sandwiches for $18 and champagne for $20. Every table is taken. Ron the magician is wooing a young Russian woman who owns three beauty salons, but he does not know what she confided to a friend. "I like him, and I have fun going to the socials. But I would not marry someone I met at those cocktails unless he was willing to stay in Moscow. Why would I leave Moscow now?"

There are still women, like Katya the accountant, for whom leaving Russia is not a complicated question. And, there are others who, though encouraged by Russia's present boom, are worried enough by the political uncertainty to consider escaping to the West. But there is a growing sense that, as Russia becomes more Westernized, more Russian women are acquiring a taste of Western self-sufficiency, and liking it. Whether they earn their money in hotels and bars or in the workplace, Russian women will soon be doing it for themselves; the Western men who are looking for the last malleable daughters of a prefeminist society had better hurry.

LIESL SCHILLINGER is a free-lance writer.

**What the Virginia GOP has wrought.**

# DUE NORTH

*By John B. Judis*

On June 4 the 14,000 Virginia Republicans who jammed Richmond's Coliseum nominated former Iran-contra conspirator Oliver North to be their candidate for the U.S. Senate. By doing so, they split their party into seemingly irreconcilable factions. On one side is North, backed by Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition and other tribunes of the religious right, which have shown immense skill at taking over party organizations but little ability to win popular elections. On the other side is most of Virginia's congressional delegation, including Senator John Warner, who has refused to endorse North.

North's nomination is a travesty—a triumph of cynical opportunism and ignorant zeal. But it is also the culmination of a process that has led the Virginia GOP from domination to disunion. For a century after the Civil War Republicans were virtually shut out of Virginia politics, except in the mountainous, anti-secessionist west; but beginning in 1969, with the election of Linwood Holton as governor, they experienced a steep ascent. Under the late party chairman Richard Obenshain, the Republicans united pro-growth, anti-tax Goldwater conservatives with pro-civil rights moderates from the West. By 1980 Republicans controlled nine House seats and one Senate seat, as well as all the major state offices, including governor and lieutenant governor. But a decade later the situation was almost reversed: the Democrats had won back half the congressional seats, the state legislature and every major state office.

During this period Virginia became heavily suburbanized. Many of the new suburbanites were émigrés from the North: politically independent, skeptical of tax increases and welfare spending but supportive of money for highways, schools and sewers. Many either worked for the government or for industries that depend on government spending. They were racially tolerant, and they abhorred government interference in their private lives. During the '70s many of these voters flocked to the GOP, but during the '80s they abandoned it in droves.

Why? First, the Democrats replaced their left-wing populism, represented by 1977 gubernatorial candidate Henry Howell, with a middle-of-the-road politics focused on strong defense, economic growth, environmentalism and civil rights. This occurred largely thanks to Chuck Robb, who was elected governor in 1981. Second, the religious right entered the GOP, infusing its agenda with a combustible mix of social issues—from opposition to



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abortion to support for Christian home-schooling. In the beginning the religious right had little actual power in the party, but its presence was sufficient to make Republicans suspect among the new suburban voters.

In 1981 Robb successfully tied his opponent to the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Lynchburg-based Moral Majority. In 1985 Gerald Baliles targeted his opponent's pro-life stand and his support for teaching creationism in public schools. In 1989 Doug Wilder also focused on his opponent's pro-life stand. In each campaign, Democrats dramatized any hint of racial intolerance. Like opposition to abortion, opposition to civil rights reinforced an image of social backwardness.

Undeterred by these setbacks, the religious right stepped up its organizing within the Republican Party. After Pat Robertson lost the GOP presidential primary in 1988 he formed the Christian Coalition. Based in Virginia Beach and run by baby-faced New Right operative Ralph Reed, it sought, in Reed's words, "to take back this country, one precinct at a time, one neighborhood at a time and one state at a time." The Coalition began, however, by taking over county and state party organizations, where it could capitalize on its members' passion. In 1992 Robertson's group successfully pushed former Reagan Justice Department official Patrick McSweeney for state party chairman. The next year it joined with another religious right outfit, the Home School Legal Defense Association, to pack the state convention—contributing roughly half of the 13,000 delegates. Together, the groups backed ex-Moral Majority Director Michael Farris's bid for lieutenant governor, even though Farris had no experience as a politician.

Last year, thanks to the low approval ratings of Clinton and Wilder, Republicans stood a good chance of winning back the state government. George Allen, who kept the religious right at arm's length by refusing to take a stand against abortion, beat State Attorney General Mary Sue Terry in the race for governor. Farris, however, was easily bested by car dealer Don Beyer, who ran against his fundamentalist views. And candidates identified with the religious right have continued to lose. This spring a slate of five "back to basics" school board candidates lost every seat to candidates backed by the Virginia Beach Education Association. The election turned on the last-minute revelation that Robertson had contributed $15,000 to the more conservative candidates.

At this year's Republican Convention, however, the religious right was back again. The convention was run by McSweeney, who is feuding with Allen and Warner, who are, coincidentally, the most popular Republicans in the state. And it clearly bore the mark of the Christian Coalition. The keynote speech was given by Dick Cheney, the coalition's private choice for president in 1996, who obliged by pledging his "wholehearted enthusiastic support" to North and by attacking Warner. And Farris was given an extraordinarily prominent role, including a major speech and the introduction of Cheney.

McSweeney, Farris and other Republican leaders displayed the classic symptoms of political sectarianism at the convention, adjusting their idea of reality to their ideological preconceptions. McSweeney insisted to me that "the media" were responsible for the perception that the Republican Party had strayed too far to the right. "This is precisely the argument I heard in the '70s about Ronald Reagan," he said, forgetting that Reagan carefully distanced himself from the religious right in 1980. He blamed Warner for the GOP's decline in the '80s, ignoring the fact that in exchange for the central committee's endorsement in 1978, Warner had agreed to stay out of internal party politics.

When I asked about Farris's defeat last year, McSweeney fingered Warner, who didn't endorse Farris. Farris insisted that he lost because his opponent engaged in a "smear campaign," and he rejected the idea that voters were uncomfortable with his social views. His pro-life stand, he told me, gave him a "5 percent bump." Farris may run against Warner in 1996—a move that would further divide Virginia Republicans. But to the sectarian, division is an instrument of purification and salvation, even if it leads to political defeat.

At the convention, North was challenged by former Reagan Budget Director Jim Miller, a bland man who resembles a small-town bank president, while ex-Attorney General Marshall Coleman, backed by Warner, waited in the wings, threatening an independent candidacy if North were nominated. Each man represented a faction of the party: North, the religious right; Miller, traditional conservatives; Coleman, western and suburban moderates. North's surprisingly close win over Miller—55 percent to 45 percent—showed how tenuous his hold was over the convention, even though the moderates were entirely absent. North lost most of the suburban enclaves to Miller, including Virginia Beach.

North himself is by no means a tool of the right-wing sectarians. He has a vaunted ability to use those who think they are using him. But North is closer to this faction of the party than any previous senatorial or gubernatorial candidate. For five years he has been appearing regularly with Robertson, who has helped him with fund-raising; the Christian Coalition has provided him with volunteers and delegates. North, in turn, has adopted their issues and their theme of moral and social decay perpetrated by a Washington liberal elite.

Still, North could ultimately prove an embarrassment to the religious right by revealing the naked quest for secular power that lies beneath the surface of much biblical piety. North plays the role of a true believer—his voice hushed when he speaks, his eyes fixed on a distant horizon—but he seemingly has had no compunction about lying, whether to Congress or to his followers. His campaign itself is based on a canard. North, who was the epitome of the unaccountable Washington bureaucrat, is running against the "unaccountable elites" in Washington. "Our adversary is not some foreign tyranny," he told the cheering throngs. "It is the arrogance and power of a new nobility in our nation's capital."



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North's campaign also has little to do with Virginia. It is a continuation of a restoration fantasy scripted by third-string Reagan officials who feel the Gipper veered off course during his last years. North's key advisers are Beltway insiders like Don Senese, who worked in the Education Department and the Republican National Committee under Reagan and at the Labor and Interior Departments under George Bush. "You can be an insider in employment, but an outsider in your politics," Senese assured me.

North's political views are not conventionally conservative, but radical. He doesn't rail against the "imperial presidency" (the target of older conservatives such as James Burnham) but rather the "imperial Congress"—the institution that, for its faults, most clearly reflects the popular will. Like George Wallace's presidential candidacy in 1968 or Ross Perot's in 1992, North's candidacy contains echoes of an American Poujadism or even fascism.

But North is a far less serious politician than either Wallace or Perot. He has no program outside of the usual apolitical bromides: term limits and a balanced budget. At the convention, he took no stand on any substantive issue facing Congress—from health care to military spending. Although he once worked for Reagan's National Security Council, he took no position on foreign affairs. North's issues director couldn't tell me what the candidate thought about Haiti or North Korea. North is, in short, one of those hucksters who periodically haunt the American polling place and pulpit.

Reed and North's other supporters boast that he will expand the Republican base in the fall by winning over a new class of "Wal-Mart Republicans." Yet his success among the rural poor will easily be outweighed by his failure among Virginia's suburbanites, who will not take well to his religious zealotry or his attacks against the government that employs them. Still, because of the peculiarities of this election, North could win. Robb, the incumbent, has a credible record in the Senate, but is crippled by sex scandals and by dissension within his own party. Wilder, consumed by hatred of Robb, may run as an independent on Robb's left. Coleman, contemptuous of North, may run as an independent on Robb's right. Wilder and Coleman could take votes primarily from Robb rather than from North, making it possible for the former arms trader to win with only 25 percent.

Yet a North victory could prove even more damaging to Virginia Republicans than a decisive North defeat. It would strengthen the resolve of McSweeney and other sectarians to purge Warner and the moderates from the party. It would embolden the religious right, which already controls state parties in Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Iowa, Washington and South Carolina. And it could inspire a presidential challenge by a candidate even closer to the religious right than Cheney. Who knows? North himself might be convinced to go for it all in 1996. While that could prove a chilling prospect for some moderate Republicans, it just might warm the heart of the Clinton White House. •

**THE PRESS**

# POTUS OPERANDI

*By Michael Lewis*

SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND

Even on the best of days the White House reporter who travels with the president spends most of his time a long way from where you might expect him to be. And today is not the best of days. The Potus—White House press code for President of the United States—left the Cambridge Military Cemetery at 11:20 a.m., more than an hour ago, to wend his way 200 miles to the southern coast of England, and thence to the beaches of Normandy. We in the press corps were meant to follow him in helicopters, but there were twice as many reporters as helicopter seats. The same choppers are to fly to Portsmouth, deposit the first wave in the path of the southwardly mobile Potus and then return to fetch us.

The weather appears to be worsening, however, and even the untrained eye senses that the choppers will be grounded. An anemic rain falls upon the press tent. Veterans, soldiers, politicians and tourists who came to see the Potus speak vanish quickly, and so the White House press corps finds itself alone in a graveyard. The pacing of idle correspondents cuts muddy trenches into the grassy floor of the tent. Hunched in the corner, a lone radio reporter works, replaying time and again the stirring conclusion of his next dispatch. It booms: "Many of the veterans have tears in their eyes as they say this may be the last time that they see this place where they arrived as boys and left as men."

A number of the journalists are uneasy. Their brief exposure to the new and putatively improved White House travel office has left them skeptical. The peach-fuzzed Clintonians carry an impressive array of communications equipment with which, apparently, they often fail to communicate. More disturbing is their habit of speaking with complete certainty about subjects (the weather, their boss) that are inherently uncertain. And so when a young White House aide named Jeremy announces with the air of a grizzled colonel that the helicopter will arrive, and that we will be delivered to Portsmouth promptly at 4:20 p.m., I put in the first call to British Rail. A nearby train would get us to Portsmouth by around 4 o'clock. I suggest to one of the Potus's aides that he should find a way to deliver us to the train station. He smiles politely, and does nothing.

To strike out on one's own, it turns out, is in violation of the code of White House correspondence. No matter how hard I try, a senior White House journalist explains to me, I will never, ever escape "the womb." The womb is



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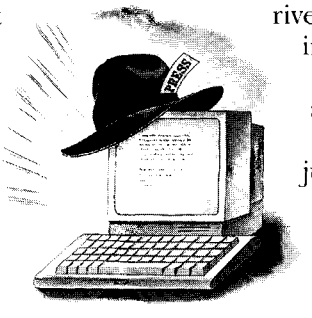
wherever the White House staff decides the journalists who cover the president should be. And that, at the moment, is an empty field in the English countryside. For the next two hours we remain pinned down. As the Potus arrives at Chequers to lunch with British Prime Minister John Major, the rain turns from a faint drizzle into a thick sheet. A French journalist mumbles uncharitably that it would be better to cover the Potus as a tourist, camouflaged in shorts and a T-shirt. All the while the maddening strains of the radio broadcast drift from the corner of the tent: "... where they arrived as boys and left as men."

At 3:30 p.m. a bus finally arrives to take us to the helicopters. There's a hitch, however; two, in fact. The bus mysteriously has no driver, and the helicopters have not arrived. Deciding that the bus would at least provide more congenial shelter than the cold tent, a few of us race 200 yards through the rain to the bus. From the upper deck, we gaze down upon a thoroughly drenched Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times*, walking slowly through the storm-swept field with the dignity of a diva coming to the front of the stage. "Being a White House correspondent," says Bob Cohn of *Newsweek*, as he climbs into the seat beside me, "is all about survival. It's an endurance test."




There are two distinctly odd features about traveling with the Potus. The first is how much less you actually see of him than you would if you had stayed at home and watched him on T.V. At any given time the vast majority of the White House press corps is relegated to transcribing secondhand accounts of the Potus's movements. By agreement with the White House, a few designated journalists follow the Potus as closely as possible and report back to the rest of the pool. The pool reports generally are more lively and more honest than the news articles cannibalizing them. Nevertheless, they betray a certain lack of proximity between the Potus and the people whose job it is to describe him. Here is a typical specimen, describing Clinton after his Drumhead ceremony in Portsmouth:

> Afterward, Clinton worked the rope line. He met a lot of ribbon-wearing veterans. We then followed Clinton on a small boat while he was on the *HMY Britannia*; couldn't see him. Our little ever-bobbing "chase" boat, by the way, was too slow to keep up with the *Britannia*, so we took a lot of shortcuts. Best color we saw was this: the presidential party watched an impressive flyover, including jets flying in a stunning precision formation reading "50." I believe Clinton gazed skyward at this display, although we were pretty far away.

The second strange thing about this business of covering the Potus is how much trouble you go to for your nonexistent access. The Potus rises at 7 a.m. to decide whether to take his morning jog; you rise at 5 a.m. to stake out his residence in a minibus on the off chance that he does jog, in which case you dash madly through the streets for the merest glimpse of him. The Potus's long black limousine glides smoothly from event to event; your Greyhound belches and heaves in the middle of a traffic jam so that you may squint at the Potus from behind a crowd of thousands at a distance of fifty yards. The Potus decides he wants some private time; you are herded by young aides into a big white press tent, where you are subjected to bureaucrats who stop by to "make news." Any news, however meaningless, hits the pressroom like food in a fish tank, since nothing much actually happens on a trip with the Potus.

As we finish boarding the bus a driver arrives. Suddenly Jeremy marches in and announces that "[the helicopter] is coming at 4:30. That is absolutely, positively confirmed." He then returns to his cellular phone and says, officiously, "What we're doing now is that we're on our way to a pub." I check my schedule. The president is leaving Hartwell House in Buckinghampshire and heading south at speed.

The pub is called The Churchill. It has beer, a video game called Crystal Maze and a television. A few of the White House correspondents grope their way through the Crystal Maze while the others watch on the television the early stages of the ceremony in which the Potus will participate. I check the schedule. The Potus is winging his way toward *HMY Britannia*.

An hour or so later the helicopter hasn't arrived. Jeremy grows contrite. "I had been given incorrect information," he says, "I'm sorry."

"Is the helicopter grounded?" someone asks.

"They're not grounded," says Jeremy. "It's just a communications question."

At 5:22 Jeremy's confidence is fully restored. "O.K.," he barks. "We're doing it! Load the bus." We trudge back onto the bus and are about to pull out when someone asks, "Where's Wendell?" Wendell Goler is the man from the Associated Press Radio. It turns out that he is filing a story—about what one can only imagine—from the phone in the pub. Once Wendell is retrieved, we're off.

The mood in the bus has become a wee bit ugly. From down below there drift shouts. "This is a major fuck-up," someone says. "You lost a helicopter."

"I didn't lose a helicopter," says someone else, "It was never in the air."

"Bob," someone else says, "are you upset?"

"I'm not upset," says Bob, "but I still think it's a huge fuck-up."

About twenty minutes later we arrive at the airstrip. There is no helicopter. Weeds sprout through the tarmac. Rain falls. Five White House aides strike out in separate directions. Each holds a cellular phone. "They're all taking notes," I hear Jeremy whisper into his phone, referring to a few journalists, including me. "Please move away," another White House aide tells me angrily.

"You're limiting access," I say, hoping to make it sound like a grave offense.

"I'm not limiting access," he says hurriedly, and backs off.

Fifteen minutes later everyone has pretty well given up on the choppers. Then, one by one, the cellular phones of the young Clintonians begin to die. Without



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their edge in communications technology the aides lose control over the press; as the last phone blips silent there is a moment reminiscent of the scene in *Lord of the Flies* when the bad boys grab the conch from Piggy and assume control of the island. A dark brooding television man shouts, "Nobody knows! Nobody knows!" A newspaper woman says, "I hope they've put my picture on a milk carton." Then the man from the A.P. announces, "We can no longer rely on the White House travel office!" With that, the pack decides to take control of the bus. Hijack is perhaps too strong a word for what follows. In any case, since the driver is not permitted by his company to drive to Portsmouth, we instruct him to take us to the train station.

At 6:35 p.m. the Potus is being greeted by the Queen of England. Two hundred miles to the north, we are passing the Churchill pub, for the second time. By 6:45 we're inside the Cambridge train station. But just as we're about to buy our tickets, the bus dispatcher employed by the White House to help the young aides says, "Whoa! There's another bus coming. Before you put these people on that train. I have a bus that's within striking distance. I can have it here in minutes."

"You see," explains a weary older correspondent, "You show a little assertiveness. You say you're going on the train. But they drag you back into the womb." The five White House aides form a huddle. "How many Clintonites does it take to screw in a light bulb?" asks the journalist, rhetorically.

Standing in the Cambridge train station, waiting for the bus, munching on what appears to be a mayonnaise sandwich, I note from my itinerary, kindly provided by the White House staff, that the Potus was just then arriving at Guildhall for dinner with the queen. Another passage then catches my eye. It is addressed to us:

> Note for press who choose to remain behind and wait for later helicopters. A fine decision. Even waiting for the second helicopters is *faster* into Portsmouth than taking an immediate bus. There will be lunch for the lingerers, and . . . veterans to talk to.

Suddenly Jeremy rushes in and says, "The helicopter has arrived." Few care. One-third of the journalists board the train, among them the man from A.P. radio. "That is an incredible act of rebellion for Wendell," says one of his colleagues. "I'll bet he hasn't taken public transportation in fifteen years." The rest of us whisper among ourselves. Another White House aide comes over and in a pleading tone says, "What are you all considering? Are you considering the helicopter or the bus?" We glare. "Please," he says. The bus pulls up. Twenty seconds later one of the White House people says, a bit huffily, "What? Are we going to get on the bus or are we going to stand around and talk about it?" Inevitably we are drawn back into the womb.

Just before midnight the bus drops us some distance from our destination in Portsmouth. We trudge the last mile in the dark along the sea wall, while somewhere out in the harbor, on the queen's lovely yacht, the Potus sleeps sweetly. •

**Reading the defense secretary's mind.**

# PERRY'S PARRY

*By Charles Lane*

North Korea's Kim Il Sung may prefer to go to war rather than give up his nuclear bombs. Or he may not. But he did spend hours watching tapes of the U.S. military blowing away Iraq with high-tech weapons, according to Robert W. Gaskin, a former Pentagon planner who studied the North Korean military for the Bush administration. "It made a deep impression," says Gaskin. Kim's respect for U.S. high-tech weaponry is one reason the Clinton administration is betting his talk of war is a bluff.

It is also an indirect tribute to William J. Perry. As an aerospace entrepreneur and as President Jimmy Carter's undersecretary of defense for research and engineering from 1977 to 1981, he promoted many of the weapons systems and much of the communications hardware that won Desert Storm. How fitting that Perry, now secretary of defense, gets to square off with Kim directly.

Perry, a 66-year-old mathematician who started out in the Clinton administration as deputy secretary of defense, was Clinton's fourth choice to run the Pentagon. First came the resignation of Les Aspin, then the weird flameout of Bobby Ray Inman, then Warren Rudman's refusal. The early returns on Perry's performance, however, have been positive. Precisely because of his rigorous mind and knowledge of weapons development, Perry seems well-suited to those aspects of the job that involve dealing with "the building."



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The new secretary has crisped up the atmosphere at Pentagon meetings that used to meander under Aspin. He has pushed for reforms in the Pentagon's byzantine procurement system, looking for savings by buying commercially available products instead of requiring suppliers to meet absurd military specifications. He has begun an overhaul of Aspin's troubled "bottom-up review." The five-year reorganization plan calls for a force that would cost $50 billion more than Congress has approved. Unless it is revised, the services will be tempted to skimp on training and maintenance (especially important, and costly, for high-tech weapons). That could leave a "hollow force"—heavily equipped, but unready.

Another Perry priority is shoring up the U.S. defense industrial base. As the Pentagon shrinks and contractors wither and die, there is a danger that the country will forfeit valuable plants and skilled labor that it would need to rearm in a future crisis. To hedge against this, Perry has gone ahead with the Sea Wolf nuclear submarine, a nuclear aircraft carrier and other systems, even though they serve no current military purpose.

Perry has taken other controversial stands. He has argued that the current system of licensing on "dual-use" exports only hampers U.S. firms. To those who say he is risking the rise of another Iraq, Perry pleads realism. The technologies are widely available anyway—controls are thus "hopeless." Better to permit access to most American dual-use goods, and use them to induce countries to sign and stick to nonproliferation agreements.

But the big surprise about Perry has been his emergence as a spokesman for the Clinton administration on foreign policy. Basically, he is filling the slot that has been left empty by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and national security adviser Anthony Lake—and the president himself. Perry has sketched a policy of engaging Russia, while hedging against a possible return to militarism in Moscow, and has sought to limit American military involvement in Bosnia. And, more recently, he has made it his business to keep the North Korea issue before the public. Plainly, his image as a mere technocrat is a caricature. But what ideas does he bring to the task of foreign policy, and to figuring out where force fits into it?

Perry's argument on export controls is characteristic of his thinking about the world after containment. It combines an appeal to realism—in the pessimistic sense of dealing with unpleasant but unchangeable limitations—with faith in the capacity of multilateral institutions to safeguard U.S. interests. Moral and political language seldom crop up in his writings and speeches, which are instead peppered with references to such concepts as "the knee in the cost-performance curve." Our foreign policy toward Russia, he said in a recent speech at George Washington University, should be guided by two "fundamental principles. The first of those is realism and the second is pragmatism."

But these are not principles. The first is an attitude and the second is a tactic. Traces of this view of the world were already visible during Perry's career as a designer of military hardware to fight the Soviets. His notion of war elevated technology and relegated politics almost to an afterthought. Indeed, to the degree political leadership shows up at all as a variable in his strategic calculations, it is as a complicating factor.

A soldier himself only for a two-year hitch just after World War II, Perry is perhaps best thought of as a product of another, very different subculture: the rarefied world of aerospace professionals. It's a world of precise formulas and deep secrets kept by highly competent adepts. Trained to conquer complex problems through mental discipline, the "systems analysts," as they are also known, see creative challenges in subjects outsiders find somewhat less thrilling. "Lanchester's famous treatise on military combat derives a square-law relation between quality and quantity," Perry observed in a 1982 article published by West Point. (Translation: if the enemy has four times as many tanks as you do, yours must be sixteen times better to win.) In Perry's circles, Lanchester's treatise really *was* famous.

Perry was one of the best in this arcane business. His specialty was "electronic countermeasures" (ECM)—methods for making American planes invisible to Soviet radar. His first company, ESL Inc., was a pioneer in the field. The firm was a success; TRW eventually bought it. In 1981 Perry joined Hambrecht & Quist, a San Francisco investment banking firm that had helped him start ESL. It specializes in spotting small Silicon Valley firms with potential, and then either taking them public or selling them to larger firms. Perry made big money in this high-risk field, using his knowledge of the aerospace industry and Pentagon weapons plans to help defense contractors find and buy promising firms.

The main strategic problem Perry had been called upon to deal with during the Carter years was this: by the late '70s the idea of a nuclear exchange between the superpowers had lost credibility. The Soviets didn't believe we would fight one—or could win if we did. And they outnumbered us in conventional forces. So the temptation for the Soviets to attack in Europe seemed to Perry, and to his boss, Defense Secretary Harold Brown, to be growing. Their solution was the "offset strategy": to use our advantage in technology to make up for the Soviets' huge numerical advantage in weapons and men.

This concept also reflected deeper assumptions Brown and Perry shared about the attitude of Americans toward defense in the wake of Vietnam. Unlike Soviet drones, our factory workers demanded high wages. Our young people and their parents would not countenance a draft. So "it would not be politically feasible," as Perry put it, to ask the public to pay for an attempt to match the Soviets tank for tank and soldier for soldier. We would have to turn to Lanchester's formula and make fewer weapons that were dramatically better than the Soviets' stuff. The American "force multiplier" would be high tech. It was a centrist Democratic way to answer charges that the party was soft on defense, without busting the budget or imposing sacrifices that could not be sustained democratically. It was a way to prevent politics from undermining defense. And basically, it worked.



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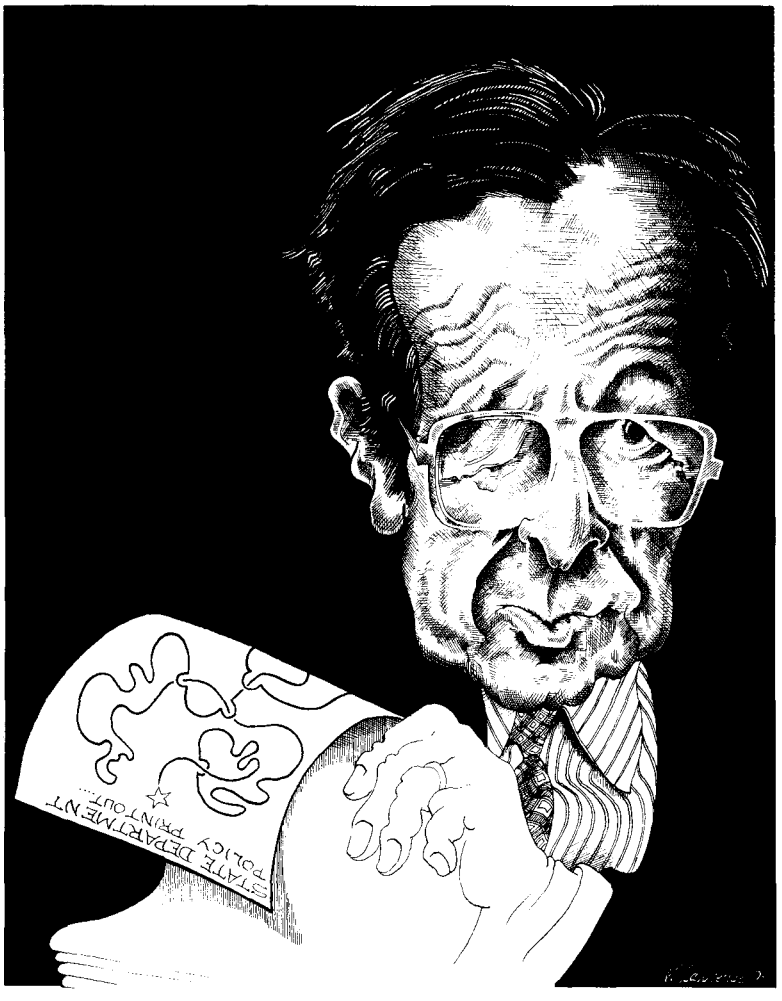
Under Brown and Carter, Perry pushed even more advanced forms of ECM, and also the series of technological innovations known collectively as Stealth. His briefings on Stealth, then still a part of the Pentagon's secret "black budget," helped persuade Carter to scrap the older model B-1 on the theory that the superior B-2 Stealth bomber would soon replace it anyway, according to Victor Utgoff, who handled military technology matters on the National Security Council staff at the time. (The Reagan administration later decided to buy both planes.) Another innovation supported by Perry was the use of microelectronics to convert the U.S. military into a "reconnaissance strike force."

The "reconnaissance strike" idea was audacious. The U.S. military would be equipped with the latest technology for command, control, communication and intelligence—known in military parlance as "C3I." Using these tools, such as AWACS planes, and the JSTARS system, U.S. forces would be able to see and assess Soviet armor before the Soviets could see and assess them. This great advantage would then permit the United States to "suppress" Soviet defenses (using aircraft made invisible to radar by ECM and Stealth). To finish the job, U.S. planes, helicopters and tanks, outfitted with laser-guided missiles and other precision weapons, would destroy the Soviet tank legions. And best of all, it would be done at a minimum price in friendly casualties and collateral damage—yet another way of addressing that question of political feasibility.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The absence of a real-world test for all this hardware left Perry's ideas open to criticism from the "defense reform" movement. Figures such as Senator Gary Hart and journalist James Fallows advocated simpler, cheaper weapons that wouldn't break down as easily as the high-tech stuff. Perry and the systems analysts stood accused of blindness to the huge unit costs of the systems they advocated and to human factors such as leadership, training and courage. To Perry, it was a false dichotomy: thanks to microelectronics, high-tech equipment would not only perform better than low-tech equipment, it could be cheaper and easier to maintain as well.

As it turned out, the battle for which Perry was helping the United States prepare would never be fought during the cold war. In part, we have the deterrent effect of high tech itself to thank for that. "High tech scared the hell out of the Russians," says former Marine General Bernard Trainor, a Perry associate now at Harvard University's national security studies program. "Even Field Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov [the Russian defense minister] warned in the mid-'80s that there had been a military revolution and the West had the lead."

But Perry had to wait until the Gulf war to win his argument with the reformers. The Iraqi war machine was a Soviet-model force. High-tech weapons, with the Stealth fighter and other aircraft protected by ECM leading the way, crushed it. The performance of certain high-tech systems, such as the Patriot, were plainly exaggerated in the military's initial reports. But in general it seemed that the skeptics had overlooked the effort that went into fixing early, flawed editions of high-tech systems. Unchallenged U.S. military superiority was a fact of international life. "Perry and I both patted ourselves on the back, and patted each other on the back," Brown says.

But that overlooks one not-so-small thing. Technology alone didn't win—and could never have won—the cold war or the Gulf war. The Russians had to be convinced that the Americans were prepared to spend the money and the time to develop the weaponry, and that we were politically determined to face down the enemy. Brown and Perry's hope had been simply to match our level of military strength to the politically acceptable level of national commitment and spending (which they assumed to be fixed—and relatively low). In this way, they seemed to avoid the need to shape public opinion through leadership. But Reagan's approach, put into practice by his secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, was to proclaim that whatever the price of military



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strength, we would pay it. Rather than taking the post-Vietnam boundaries of political feasibility as a given, Reagan tried to expand them, through moralism and determination.

He ran up huge deficits in the process, but the Soviets took him seriously. The prospect of a bankrupting high-tech arms race helped spur the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, who started out with the idea that he could save communism's power by making it more productive, and ended up presiding over its collapse. "We designed the high-tech weapons, the Reagan administration bought 'em and trained people to use 'em and the Bush administration used 'em," Brown says today. "The irony is that no one of the three would have done what the other two did."

National political will was also the decisive factor in Desert Storm. Neither the military nor the public was eager to fight. But George Bush's declaration that "this will not stand" galvanized both. Because Bush was prepared to see the crisis through to war, and because his secretary of defense, Dick Cheney, could trust his chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, to communicate the president's wishes to the troops, the military was made to see a doable, necessary mission. Saddam Hussein's bet that America would be crippled by the Vietnam syndrome did not pay off.

The 1980s proved, in short, that technology was necessary but not sufficient. Did Perry grasp this? In a 1991 *Foreign Affairs* article about lessons from the Gulf war, Perry listed good generalship, well-trained soldiers and high-tech weapons as the reasons for the coalition victory—with high tech being the most important. The next year, in a piece for the *Washington Quarterly* co-authored with Bobby Ray Inman, Roger K. Smith and Joseph Nye, he briefly acknowledged Bush's role and noted that Americans would, after all, support a war despite possibly high casualties—as long as they believed the cause was just.

Still, Perry had little to offer on the question of who was to persuade them that the cause was just. He took the opportunity of the victory to urge restraint and realism. In the *Washington Quarterly*, he bravely called for the United States to stake out "the middle ground between isolationism and indiscriminate internationalism." In his 1991 *Foreign Affairs* article, he warned against "hubris" about high tech: "The new capability will be quite limited in its effectiveness in any regional conflicts that are basically civil wars, or dominated by guerrilla warfare." Referring to regional conflicts as "entanglements," he advocated avoiding them by using our new military edge to "deter these conflicts rather than fight them."

Perry's centrism reflected not only the facts (Somalia proved him right that high tech would be of no use against urban guerrillas) but also the influence of yet another subculture, that of the ever-cautious foreign policy think tanks. Perry served as co-director of the Center for International Security and Arms Control at Stanford in the late '80s, and, along with Inman, Smith and Nye, presided over the Aspen Strategy Group, the discreet discussion council that produced more than a half-dozen Clinton foreign policy officials.

But the group's discussions of nuclear arcana or ethnic conflict in the Balkans could be as abstract, in their way, as the calculations of the aerospace professionals. In the Aspen meeting room, wrote David Ignatius of *The Washington Post*:

> the lighting is soft and artificial; the chairs are like first-class airline seats, except bigger. The normal world, though just outside, feels very far away.... It was a roomful of bright people discussing an important topic.... The problem was that it never really led anywhere. One was left at the end of the two days with the same muddle as before about how to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons, or how to stop the war in Bosnia. The discussion led right up to those hard moral and political choices—and then stopped.

Perry also stopped at the edge of his most stunning post-cold war conclusion: much of our technology would be useless for the regional warfare likely to be most common after the cold war! And if so, how were these wars to be deterred by weapons that couldn't threaten to win them? Mohamed Farah Aideed wasn't deterred. With Iraq vanquished and the threat of a clash between the United States and Soviet armies in Europe gone, by what criteria should we distinguish between an "entangling" war and the other kind?

Perry's most systematic effort to define the conditions under which the United States should use force was an article written for the Brookings Institution in 1992, and published this year: "Military Action—When To Use It and How To Ensure Its Effectiveness." Perry began with the assertion that the United States would henceforth retool itself as part of "a cooperative security regime." The U.N. Security Council would command a multinational force from NATO, Japan, Russia, India and China. The Americans would provide "reconnaissance strike" capability (air cover, communications and satellite intelligence); Germany, France, China, India and Russia would do the ground fighting; Japan, Italy and Britain would handle the seas.

Perry seemed to be looking for a way not to have to draw on U.S. political will and capacity for global leadership, but rather to turn the job over to a nebulous collective body. The security regime's threat of deterrence, he said, "will be maximally effective when political conditions permit the military force to be a broadly based coalition." But he didn't say how that coalition would come together, or who would lead it.

He also saw this arrangement as a chance for the United States to reduce its land and sea forces to the "minimum necessary to defend its own territory," though the United States would still have to shoulder the job of preserving its edge in high-tech "reconnaissance strike" capability. Russia and China, meanwhile, could keep large armies for territorial defense. Perry conceded that this might worry some, but said that the risks could be mitigated by getting the Russians and the Chinese to promise not to violate the U.N. charter.

Perry's plan did have the virtue of saving Americans a



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lot of money and excusing them from unpleasant ground fighting—further easing the problem of political feasibility. But otherwise, it seemed to gloss over huge and obvious questions. Would this mean the end of a U.S. ground presence in Europe? What if the rogue to be fought is North Korea, against which China would probably never send its soldiers into battle? Is the Security Council really capable of functioning as a coherent political entity? And whatever happened to U.S. national interest?

Since he became secretary, Perry's office has said this brave but naive piece is "not relevant." Yet it does contain clues to the origins of his current priorities. "The U.N. must give special priority to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons," he wrote, "because such weapons in the hands of a rogue nation can greatly complicate the ability of the regime to deter aggression and can lead to vastly greater casualties if deterrence fails." He specifically excluded "civil wars" such as the conflict in former Yugoslavia from the list of wars the security regime would prevent. It would instead counter only an armored assault by a land army against a neighbor—not surprisingly, just the type of action for which the "reconnaissance strike" force had been built. This is a precise adumbration of the policy Perry is recommending now: keep out of Bosnia—"a limited interest"—and get ready for North Korea.

This may or may not be the pragmatic thing to do. What Perry leaves unexplained, however, are the political and moral criteria that underpin his radical distinction between the two cases. Perry seems rather to derive his notion of U.S. interest from our weapons capability, not the other way around. It is not necessarily obvious that the *threat* of a rogue nuclear state should take precedence over stopping the *actual* ethnocide and violation of international order going on in the heart of Europe.

The two may even be related: the failure to show resolve in one regional theater, such as Bosnia, Haiti or Somalia, can erode your credibility—and thus increase the danger—in places such as Korea, where your deterrent depends on the other guy's belief that you will fight. Perry is aware of this relationship, but, characteristically, formulates it in limiting terms: "We should be careful to only use [force] and threaten to use it in areas where we are confident we can be effective. No empty threats," he told *U.S. News & World Report.*

Thus at the height of NATO's April showdown with the Bosnian Serbs over the siege of Gorazde, it was Perry who announced that the United States "will not enter the war" to prevent the city from falling. The White House had to scramble to disavow what the Serbs could easily have seen as a green light. As is the case with most "gaffes," Perry's mistake was to be inappropriately honest about his own views. More important, he was also communicating to the president, and the public, the fears of "mission creep" à la Somalia harbored by Gen. John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The episode thus also showed that, in the absence of clear presidential direction, the services can use the secretary of defense to channel their agenda to the commander in chief, rather than the other way around.

Perry deserves credit for raising the North Korea threat and for trying to focus the administration's efforts to deal with it. He rightly argues that this is necessary to prepare the public for the risk of war. But the clear leadership that is absent as an independent factor in his writings is still lacking in the actions of the administration. His own public statements, and those of the president and the State Department, have not communicated either unambiguous resolve to Kim Il Sung, or urgency to the American people. "The North Koreans are putting themselves in a position to force unification of the Korean peninsula on their terms," Perry has said. "It's going to be easier to deal with this problem before they get a significant nuclear and missile capability than after." Tough words—until you get to that "significant," which seems to accept the the nukes the North already has.

At other times, Perry has had to mouth support for the State Department's line that the matter can still be settled by negotiations. And last week, President Clinton himself seemed to reinforce the impression that the United States will still settle for just about any North Korean concession that will preserve the appearance of international atomic regulation: "All we want them to do is keep their word," he remarked. To be sure, the United States has been told to go slow by Japan, China and South Korea itself. But that only emphasizes the difficulty of marshaling a "cooperative security regime" if the United States isn't prepared to present allies or potential allies with a clear course of action.

Sure, if war does come, the United States and South Korea would probably win. But the victory could well be marked by a higher rate of U.S. casualties and more equipment failures than in the Gulf. Kim Il Sung has tried to learn from Iraq's mistakes. He may pour chemical weapons at U.S. troops and rain missiles on Seoul. U.S. air power will quickly gain control of the skies, but won't enjoy the high-quality air bases available in Saudi Arabia. The war won't start at the moment of our choosing, and the Korean terrain is mountainous, the winters bitter.

The nightmare scenario for Korea, sketched in a secret 1991 Pentagon analysis by Gaskin, is that the North Koreans would mass at a weak point in the South Korean army's long, thin defensive line, break through, then rush down the short road to Seoul and capture it in less than the two months it would take for American reinforcements to arrive. The U.S. would face three bad options: accepting defeat, waging a bloody battle to liberate the peninsula, or using nuclear weapons.

Few defense experts believe it will actually come to that. And under Aspin and Perry the Pentagon has taken steps to bolster South Korea's defense, such as shipping Apache helicopters to replace the Army's less deadly Cobras. But if casualties mount beyond Desert Storm levels and the public has not been prepared for it, Clinton might have to face that question of political feasibility to which Perry has spent his career devising mainly technological answers. •



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# BOOKS & The Arts

## *Stanley Kauffmann on Films*

### Eye Witnesses

Just in time. That's the near-breathless feeling we're left with after finishing a collection of interviews conducted by Sylvia Shorris and Marion Abbott Bundy. **Talking Pictures** (The New Press, 372 pp., $25) presents reminiscences of people who worked in films back in the high Hollywood days—some of them began even earlier—when there were humming studios, each turning out fifty to sixty features per year along with short subjects and, in some cases, newsreels. Thirty-four of these thirty-eight interviews were finished by 1986 when the subjects were in their 80s; seventeen of them died before this book went to press. (No reason is given as to why the book took eight years to appear.) This is eyewitness oral history, set down at almost the last minute.

Shorris and Bundy were not interested in glamorous figures: they wanted to investigate the lives of artisans and artists who had done the less publicized work that helped to give the famous their fame. We've had books of interviews with film editors or cinematographers or designers or writers, and in 1974 Mike Steen published *Hollywood Speaks*, an invaluable set of interviews with various film professionals, but these books featured celebrities. Shorris and Bundy were after the rank and file: the only people in their book who may be known to the general public are the director André de Toth, the composer Jule Styne and the lyricist Sammy Cahn.

In her introduction Shorris says:

> As we got deeper into our interviews, we made a great discovery. The people who worked in the industry in those years, even the humblest of them, were not merely laborers without interest or understanding.... They were a proud cadre of master builders, men and women who knew they were in at the creation of a new art form.

If we allow for some affectionate expansion on the editors' part, the statement is borne out.

The first subject is Arthur Jacobson, aged 84 in 1985, who became an assistant director in Hollywood but who, as a high school kid, wangled a petty job in the Biograph studio on 175th Street in the Bronx. After Jacobson we meet at least one of the following: production managers, camera operators, readers, script girls, sound men, carpenters, costume designers, property masters, extras, stunt women, dancers, film editors and more. One agent. One booker. Even one producer's assistant, who insists on anonymity because she tells how she was harassed for sexual favors. Most of the interviews include a photograph of the subject, taken back then.

The insights into the nitty-gritty of filmmaking are profuse. In some of the occupations—sound recording and cinematography, for instance—a medieval-guild air pervades, with apprentices working their way up under masters. One negative freedom in all these people is their nonconcern with the overall quality of the films they worked on. This didn't breed cynicism in them. A surgeon isn't cynical just because he's unconcerned with his patient's character: he just wants to get the inflamed appendix out neatly.

But these film people, and their colleagues, worked so well in their fields that they helped to put Hollywood in the forefront (where it still is) of world film success. The *making* of American films was so fine, so much better than much local production around the globe, that they overwhelmed questions of credibility and depth. Superb Hollywood craft sustained seductive Hollywood fantasy.

Inevitably a book of this kind includes wry "backstage" glimpses: here are some samples. Eleanor Wolquitt, a reader for a studio, "absolutely flipped" for a novel by Douglas Wallop called *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* and recommended it to her bosses. They "passed on it." In other hands it became *Damn Yankees*, a Broadway hit and a film, and which is now again on Broadway.

George Folsey began as a studio odd-jobs boy:

> One of my duties was to get everybody's lunch. I used to get [Adolph] Zukor's sardine sandwich at a little Jewish delicatessen below the studio. I used to get [Edwin S.] Porter's lunch from a Chinese restaurant, and two Pittsburgh stogies. Then they would send me to get Jack Barrymore's lunch. I used to go to a nearby hotel or restaurant....

In time Folsey became a cinematographer who worked with, among others, Irene Dunne. He noticed that, in the course of a take, "a little black mark

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

**Four Weddings and a Funeral.** *British and breezy. A comic romance between Hugh Grant and Andie MacDowell skitters through the five occasions. Grant bubbles, MacDowell breathes hard. (Reviewed 4/4/94)* **Sunday's Children.** *Ingmar Bergman's screenplay, directed by his son, Daniel, is about* himself *as son—to his difficult father. Fascinatingly somber under its lyric look. (5/16/94)* **Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould.** *A unique treasure. Glenn Gould's crotchets and talent are viewed wittily and well by the director-author François Girard. (4/25/94)* **White.** *Set in Paris, then Warsaw. A Polish hairdresser goes to funny-sexy extremes to win back his divorced French wife. The script zigzags engagingly. (6/13/94)* **—SK**



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would appear on her chin.... I decided that it had to be some kind of muscle; it had to be something that appeared as a result of her talking." So he set up a small spotlight on a swivel, ordered an aide to keep it pointed at Dunne's chin and to bring up that light on a cue from him. It killed the black mark.

Arthur Jacobson tells us that, in the making of *Miracle on 34th Street*, Edmund Gwenn, who played Santa Claus, "had a little problem. He never knew when he was going to urinate." This problem could be handled in short scenes, but it made for difficulty in the long sequence of the Macy's Christmas parade. "So we dressed him very very warmly, and we rigged a funnel with a long pipe trailing out of the sleigh.... That's picture-making."

One of the most enlightening interviews is with Linwood Gale Dunn, a visual effects director of photography and inventor of a special effects optical printer. Dunn was one of those technicians who get special awards during the Oscar broadcasts (he got his in 1981) while the audience waits impatiently for more glitz. One of his most notable collaborations was with Orson Welles on *Citizen Kane*. (The photo here of Dunn and his invention also appears in Robert Carringer's *The Making of Citizen Kane*.) Many will remember the sequence in which the camera moves down through the rain-streaked skylight of the nightclub where Susan Alexander is singing. Dunn explains how the camera goes through the glass.

We can all be glad Shorris and Bundy outpaced the Grim Reaper. Their book is a tidy hoard of welcome sentiment and little-known fact.

**Freedom on My Mind** (Tara) recounts a quite different history—also with the aid of participants who survived. This documentary, well-made by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford, is the story of the genesis and struggle of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964, all black people, and its attempt to unseat the segregationist regular Mississippi delegation at the presidential convention in Atlantic City that year.

The courage of these people, supported by some young white people from outside the state, is movingly stated. Not overstated. Many of the people seen in the newsreel clips are shown today, commenting on the past. The chronicle moves up to President Johnson's fury at the black delegation, whose seating at the convention might have loosened his grip on the South. We see Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's mealy-mouthed errand boy, offering a compromise to the MFDP, which they proudly refuse to accept.

This frightening, disgusting, thrilling story took place only thirty years ago. Thus *Freedom on My Mind* grants some license for hope about the next thirty years. (After its opening at the Film Forum in New York, it will be shown elsewhere. Watch for it.) •

# *Robert Brustein on Theater*

## The American Mouth

**Sally Marr ... and her escorts**, which features five actors and a four-piece band at the Helen Hayes Theatre, is actually a one-woman show. If that strikes you as an anomaly, then you've never watched Joan Rivers. Endowed with the thrust of a jackhammer and the insistence of a dentist's drill, she gives new meaning to the American tradition of self-reliance. People are allowed on stage with her, but except for a few recorded voice-overs, no one else is allowed to speak. (The Rivers signature "Can we talk?" obviously contains an inaccurate plural subject.) In *Sally Marr* Rivers monopolizes the play for more than two hours, permitting her "escorts" only to smile or dance or scowl or lip sync like a chorus of the mute. There should be a new Equity category for this kind of passive acting. She even drowns out the band. Yeats dreamed of Shaw as a relentless sewing machine. How would he have dreamed of Rivers? As a perpetual motion mouth?

We've seen performers before who are always on. Rivers is on and on and on. One has to admire the boundless vitality that drives such an engine, but it's exhausting to watch. We may laugh a lot, but feel depleted at the end, as if she were filling her reserve tank with the audience's energy. Since Rivers's idea of speech is a soliloquy, listening to her amplified hoarse voice braying at us like a yammering yenta is equivalent to Chinese water torture. She must have been


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born not like Richard III, with a full set of teeth, but with a full set of monologues.

Sally Marr, the mother of Lenny Bruce and a stand-up comic herself, is clearly a character with whom Rivers closely identifies. She has based her new play (written with Erin Sanders and Lonny Price) on the emotional history of the woman—unfortunately not recollected in tranquillity. On her first appearance she is schlepping a movie screen up the aisle of the theater, sporting a mink coat and huge black horn-rimmed glasses, complaining about her aging body and how nobody is helping with the screen ("fucking liberation, we did this to ourselves!"). The screen is a visual aid for her comedy class, conducted in a gymnasium otherwise used for basketball by the "Our Lady of Esperanza All-Stars." Not long after, she is rolled into a hospital on a gurney, having been raped by a robber when he learned she was Bruce's mother.

It is while watching herself lying unconscious, being worked over by doctors and ignored by a callous nurse, that she narrates the story of her life. Sally has her own Yiddish-inspired routines, usually performed in transvestite burlesque theaters, and some of the jokes are funny—a miscreant told to "Sin no more and say twenty Hail Murrays," a rabbi who "doesn't blow the shofar, he blows the cantor." She also manages a few laughs over her failure to keep a clean home ("People would wipe their feet when they left"). But if Sally Marr is no balabusta, she is not a ball-buster, either. Her abiding good nature is the source of her difficulties. Yet the various details of her unhappy childhood, truncated married life and perfunctory love affairs (including an unsuccessful effort to seduce the rabbi in exchange for a free bar mitzvah for Lenny) would engage us more if they were accounts of a significant historical figure. Sally, for all her color, has interest mainly as the mother and mentor of a celebrated son.

No doubt because of Rivers's compulsion to dominate the evening, there is far too much about Sally Marr and far too little about Lenny Bruce. We learn of his exposure, at an early age, to the kind of raw language that would later inform his routines, his tour of duty as a gunner's mate in the Navy, his change of name from Schneider to Bruce and his "skyrocketing to fame" as an underground comic. But there are only a few snatches from his great nightclub spritzing, and virtually nothing about his ground-breaking struggle with the legal system over the use of obscene material. Bruce's death from an overdose is treated primarily as an opportunity for Rivers to exercise her tear ducts.

By the end, when Sally's nurse, who hasn't once cracked her sour features, begins giggling uncontrollably, a theme begins to emerge, which is that people like Sally Marr (and Rivers) serve a crucial human function—to make people laugh. But if others on stage are allowed to respond only with laughter, and not with language, then dramatic relationships are virtually impossible. It may be that *Sally Marr . . . and her escorts* has been inspired by the current mythology that the person responsible for the achievements of every talented, celebrated man is an even more talented, uncelebrated woman (Hélène Cixous's new novel *Manna*, according to a recent ad, is about how wives like Winnie Mandela "disclose and restore their partners' lives"). I have no doubt that Sally Marr was gifted. So is Rivers. But on this occasion, those gifts are eclipsed by the solipsism of a totally self-infatuated performer.

Eric Bogosian is another American mouth, and another monologuist who has written a play; but Bogosian has usually been less interested in displaying personal ego than in delineating observed characters, and so **SubUrbia** is a lot more engrossing than *Sally Marr*. The third in the Festival of New American plays at Lincoln Center, the work is not entirely realized, partly, I suspect, because the author, who normally writes and acts his characters, isn't performing any of the roles. But *SubUrbia* reveals a real if developing dramatist at work, with an impeccable ear, who only needs to extend his control of dialogue and character into a command of plot and action.

Recalling Bogosian's birthplace in Woburn, Massachusetts, the play takes place in a working-class suburb called Bernfield, "the pizza and puke capital of the world." In a manner similar to such genre pieces as Fellini's early film *I Vitelloni* and George Lucas's *American Graffiti*, it concerns a group of wayward, listless youths. They spend their endless leisure hours lounging in the parking lot of a 7-Eleven, quarreling, cursing, eating 'shrooms and smoking pot and trying to make out with girls, when they are not munching pizza take-out or swilling Budweisers. (By the end of the play, the stage is strewn with crunched beer cans and potato chips.) Without purpose or ambition, they are virtually imprisoned in their squalid environment and their personal anomie. Only one of their number has escaped to the outside world—a second-class rock star named Pony—and they await the arrival of his black stretch limo during the early scenes of the play as if it were the coming of some pop Godot.

In short, *SubUrbia* is about Bogosian's perennial themes of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, and about the testosterone-clogged people from his past who enacted those themes. Each seems to be competing over who is most alienated ("the end of the world, man," says one, "no hope, no ideas, fucking apocalypse"). The nicest character, and perhaps the author's surrogate, is Jeff, a would-be writer and comparative liberal among a band of bigots. Jeff is hopeless about his future and his inability to hold on to Sooze, a girl with ambitions to go to New York, become an artist and "make people think for a change." Then there is Buff, "the postmodern idiot savant," a hyperactive, long-haired, scuzzball pothead and alcoholic, who makes his entrance on Roller Blades wearing a tie-dyed shirt, and spends the rest of the play getting shit-faced. There is also Bee-Bee, a depressed ex-alcoholic fresh from rehab, where the other girls got convulsions from shooting up cough medicine. And there is Tim, the mercurial Air Force vet who won himself an honorable discharge by cutting off the end of his finger, and now seems to be virtually eaten up with self-hatred, fury and prejudice against other races, particularly the Pakistani proprietor of the 7-Eleven where they hang out.

The coming of Pony with Erica, his gorgeous publicist, initiates a number of sexual encounters that all end badly, and all at one time. Pony goes off with Sooze, Tim fails to get it up with Erica and tells Jeff that he killed her. Though this proves untrue, he comes very close to killing the Pakistani. In a tense climax, the two men face each other with drawn guns until Tim, escaping onto the roof, discovers Bee-Bee up there dead from an overdose.

With so little happening throughout the play, the accumulation of incident in the last few minutes seems somewhat forced and melodramatic. It only emphasizes the absence of a significant plot line in *SubUrbia*, despite its intriguing characterizations. As if to compensate for this lack of action, the gifted Robert Falls of the Goodman Theatre has directed a production that sometimes displays the virtues of Chicago Realism, but more often seems overpunctuated, with some of the cast behaving as if they're auditioning for a sitcom. I admired Tim Guinee's performance as Tim, however, a charge of compacted plastique ready to detonate at the sight or even the thought of any minority member. And Derek McLane's construction of the 7-Eleven store, a floating island of products multiplied by clever mirror reflections, not only serves as a flexible acting space but also as an impressive example of American pop art.

If *SubUrbia* is less concentrated than



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*Talk Radio*, Bogosian's previous play, or less diverse than his previous one-man shows, that may be because it is a considerably more ambitious effort, involving nine mouths rather than one. He has always shown a remarkable capacity to encapsulate cultural moments through single-character portraits in assorted places. He is now attempting to stretch his canvas by focusing on numerous figures in a single landscape. That is an important and necessary development for his art. And his vision of the depressed suburban circumstances that foster violence and racism is often searching and true. There is a potentially strong, gritty playwright here, another David Mamet or David Rabe, who deserves a warm salute despite the structural imperfections of his play. •

# *Helter Shelter*

**BY DEBORAH STONE**

**The Homeless**
**by Christopher Jencks**
**(Harvard University Press, 161 pp., $17.95)**

**Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women**
**by Elliott Liebow**
**(The Free Press, 339 pp., $24.95)**

Not long ago, a story in my hometown newspaper caught my eye: "Family Homeless After Sunday Fire." Without reading another word, I knew that what people mean by homelessness in rural New Hampshire is not what they mean by it in cities, or what is meant by the authors of the now large literature on homelessness. Sure enough, the family in question was staying at a local motel (at whose expense the article doesn't say), townspeople were supplying them with clothes and had started a fund, and teachers at the children's school were collecting household goods, food and money to get this family back on its feet.

This family was indeed homeless in the sense that they had no place to live. Like many of the homeless described in scholarly literature, they could not move in with their adult children, because (according to the newspaper) those children either lived out of the state or didn't have enough room. Unlike the urban homeless, though, this family had a community that wanted to keep them and that mobilized an intensive social aid effort.

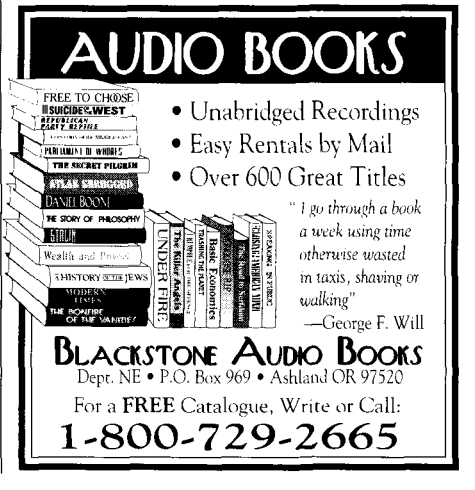
The juxtaposition of this family with the urban homeless takes one quickly to the quandary at the heart of the homelessness literature. What is homelessness, anyway? Christopher Jencks and Elliot Liebow, social scientists both, mean very different things by the question. For Jencks, whose book begins with a section titled "The Numbers," the question means something like, "How does one know whom to count as homeless?" For Liebow, whose first section is called "Problems in Living," the question means, "What is it like to be homeless?"

Jencks's book is an incisive and succinct digest of the policy literature on homelessness; indeed, Jencks began the book as a review essay for *The New York Review of Books*, which recently published a substantially similar version. Liebow's is a down-and-dirty portrait of homelessness, a sort of documentary that is part raw tape recording, part analytical montage, assembled from years of hanging out at three shelters for homeless single women in and around Washington, D.C. From Jencks one gets a synthetic overview of the problem—the size of the population (about 350,000 in an average week, he says); a rough sense of its composition (about 18 percent are families with children, about one-third are mentally ill and about one-third of the single adults are probably crack users); and an appreciation of how unemployment, drugs, mental illness and deinstitutionalization, housing prices and policies and the decline of marriage have all contributed to the increase in homelessness.

Jencks sets himself the task of estimating how much homelessness increased in the 1980s, why it increased and what can be done to reduce it. To measure an increase, one has to know what one is counting, and so Jencks begins with a fascinating reflection on what counts as a home. Before 1960 having a home apparently meant having a family. A person who lived alone and seldom saw his kin was deemed homeless. (One can't help but think of Robert Frost's line, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in.") After 1960, when living alone and away from family had become more common, a homeless person was someone with no fixed address. After 1980 our definition became, as Jencks puts it, less demanding. A home is any place intended for sleeping, and the homeless are those who have no private sleeping space of their own.

Even this minimalist definition raises a host of almost philosophical questions. People who sleep in doorways and bus stops, places not intended for sleeping, should just as clearly be counted as homeless. But what about those who sleep in shelters, places most definitely intended as sleeping quarters, albeit for the homeless? What about those who live in welfare hotels at the expense of social welfare agencies, whose entitlement to the hotel rooms is based entirely on their homelessness? What about people in mental institutions, jails and detox centers who have no other place to sleep when they get out? What about people doubled up in other people's homes, whose right to stay rests precariously on the whims of their hosts? What about children in foster care, many of whom, Jencks says, are far more homeless than kids in shelters? ("We were wards of the state," a homeless woman told Liebow about her own childhood in foster care. "Imagine belonging to the state? What the hell is that? How can you belong to something so big and vague? Can you come home to the state? Can it hold you and make you feel safe?")

Why, Jencks wonders, do we generally consider people in shelters and welfare hotels as homeless, but not people in various other institutions, people doubled up or children in foster care?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Jencks knows the answer: "we" count as homeless only the "visible homeless—people whose presence on the streets upsets the more prosperous classes." Here is the first of many moments of political equivocation that make this book puzzling: Jencks pointedly unmasks the power relations behind the scientific construction of the concept of homelessness, yet on the same page buys in to that scientific status quo by announcing his intention to count only "the people whose existence most worries the public," the people on the streets and in shelters and welfare hotels.

By coming to that decision so quickly, Jencks cuts short a worthwhile analysis of homelessness. How much is homelessness about shelter and how much is it about relationships? Frost managed to get the duality just right—home entails both a "there" and a "they." The women Liebow studied tended to place a lot of emphasis on relationships in their accounts of why they are homeless. "If I had friends, would I be living in a shelter?" asked one. In a revealing debate about who was really homeless, Louise claimed that status for herself exclusively:

> "What about Betty?"
> "Betty has relatives. She has a daughter."
> "But her daughter won't let her live with them."
> "That's her own fault," said Louise. "She would have had a home if she'd acted differently. Like Judy. Judy isn't homeless. She just can't get along with her mother."

A social scientist who is interested in counting almost has to commit himself to focusing on shelter instead of relationships, because different types of shelters make for nice, discrete, countable units. To define home even partly as having certain kinds of relationships requires one to engage in deep, extended conversations and to observe phenomena that don't stay within neat boundaries. To define and understand home relationally, one has to engage in relationships.

Jencks's and Liebow's books represent the great divide in contemporary social science, a divide that recapitulates the split between science and art described decades ago by C. P. Snow as "two cultures." The split is now sometimes simplistically labeled quantitative vs. qualitative knowledge, but it goes much deeper than method. Jencks came to know homelessness by looking at data at least three times removed from himself. He reanalyzed surveys, for example, that were organized by other researchers, such as Peter Rossi and Martha Burt, who themselves never walked the streets counting homeless people but paid others to do it or borrowed data from government agencies, who in turn acquired their data from questionnaires filled out by shelter managers or census-takers. Liebow came to know homelessness by getting steeped in it, observing, acting as volunteer staff, befriending homeless women, helping them with their tasks of living and often committing the cardinal sin of science—changing how his "subjects" thought and behaved by his own presence, talk and actions.

In choosing their methods, social scientists also choose assumptions about and conceptions of the thing they are studying. Jencks was guaranteed to write a book mostly about physical living places because that's what is countable. And because he started with a concept of home as a sleeping place, his work necessarily turned out to be about where people spend the eight or so hours a day they are inert, rather than about how people spend their time when they are awake, the time most of us think of as our living time. Liebow was guaranteed to write a book mostly about how homeless people think and live because that's what you learn in relationships, and relationships happen when people are awake. For Liebow's subjects, who are by definition already in shelters, the key problem is not finding a place to sleep, but rather how to kill time during the day, with no job and no place to go, and how to keep going in the face of profound boredom.

In the end, a relational concept of home may be truer to human experience and even more desirable as a guiding light for policy, but shelter is much easier to provide than homelike relationships. In that sense, Jencks has chosen a concept that makes the homelessness problem more amenable to policy response, while Liebow has chosen one that will almost certainly show up any policy effort as deficient.

Why, one might ask, does anyone want to know the number of homeless people? Why does it matter that we have an accurate count? A good count is necessary for calculating how much it might cost to reduce the number of homeless people. A good count and a good method of counting can enable us to make comparisons over time, to tell whether the problem is getting worse, or whether remedial policies are working. Used intelligently in conjunction with other measures, such as indicators of housing stock or unemployment, good counts can help determine the causes of the problem.

Jencks uses counts in all these ways, with nuance and exceptional clarity, though it is fair to say that most of his analyses of the causes of homelessness became part of the standard wisdom about three years ago. (John DiIulio came to many of the same conclusions in a 1991 review essay in these very pages.) The increase in homelessness in the '80s was not caused by a Reagan administration cutback in federal housing; Reagan lowered appropriations for future construction, but outlays for public housing actually increased during his term. There was, however, a sudden decline in single-room-occupancy hotels, caused in part by zealous application of local building codes and in part by urban renewal. Some homelessness was caused by deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, but even more resulted from the failure of state and local governments to provide community-based housing and other assistance to people who earlier would have been in hospitals. Much of homelessness seems to be caused, too, by a decline in unskilled jobs that pay a living wage.

If the findings aren't particularly new, why all the numerical analysis? Why go to all the effort of disputing the advocates' numbers of 1 to 3 million homeless people, as Jencks does, when the best social science had already reduced the count to something very close to Jencks's estimate of 350,000? (In 1989 Peter Rossi put the number at about 300,000.) Jencks wants to replace what he calls political numbers with scientific numbers. He faults the late Mitch Snyder for using big numbers politically and for lacking any scientific basis for his counts of 2 million to 3 million. Yet, Jencks acknowledges, since the scientific counts are based on the number of homeless people on streets and in shelters on any one night, the number of people who are homeless at some point during a year might well be over 1 million—he guesses there were about 1.2 million per year during the late 1980s—and that's not counting the people who avoid shelters, soup kitchens and other gathering places where they would be counted. So here is another puzzle: Why does Jencks want to pick a fight with Mitch Snyder and his ilk?

Jencks knows that advocates use big numbers to provoke a social response, and that "if you want to hold the attention of the mass media, breaking the 'million barrier' is important." He appears to want a political response to homelessness—he calls for one in the last chapter—but he is not willing to use big numbers or to leave others' political numbers alone. (Small numbers could be used to argue for the tractability of a problem—for example, to persuade



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those run by municipalities or by private firms contracting with government.

Jencks, too, thinks homeless people value privacy above all else, but his concept of privacy is more physical than social. Because he believes that cubicle hotels would provide a kind of privacy the homeless value, Jencks can bring himself (though barely, one senses) to advance them as the most feasible way to increase the supply of temporary housing. As he describes them in Chicago in the 1950s, they housed people in

> five foot by seven foot rooms, furnished with a bed, a chair, and a bare light bulb. Rooms were separated by wooden walls and ventilated through wire mesh near the ceiling and floor. Because of the wire mesh, such places were popularly known as cage hotels. They were always noisy, usually verminous, and frequently smelled of urine, vomit, or both.

"Nonetheless," he concludes, "almost all skid row residents preferred these hotels to the free missions run by evangelists." He offers precious little evidence for this alleged preference, save for a couple of sentences about how the cubicle hotels were cleaner than missions, afforded more privacy, allowed patrons more freedom to come and go, and didn't try to reform their character.

Jencks promotes a cleaner, more habitable version of cubicle hotels, probably located in nonresidential neighborhoods in order to be politically feasible. Otherwise the neighbors would protest. Liebow doesn't discuss the location or even the design of his ideal shelter, but no reading of his book would condone a form of housing that so isolates people from each other and from people with homes. He describes a shelter that was forced on a Maryland neighborhood in exchange for the government's promise to bus the men to and from the shelter, so they wouldn't roam the neighborhood. Just that simple description forces one to ask whether we have provided a home when we house people in places where no one else lives, or forbid them to walk to and from their proverbial front door. (Yes, if home is purely shelter; no, if home is also relationships.)

Both Jencks and Liebow think jobs are an important part of the solution to homelessness. Both exhort no one in particular to provide more jobs for unskilled workers at truly living wages. Jencks gets more specific with the idea of a publicly operated day-labor market. Some of his ideas about work have an uncanny resemblance to nineteenth-century British Poor Law. Jencks would first sort the homeless into categories of fam-


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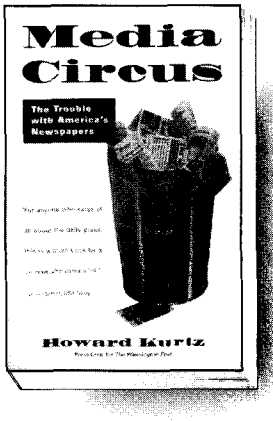


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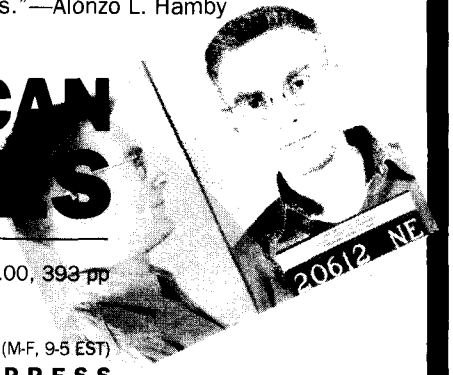


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ilies (really women with children), single adults capable of working, and the mentally and physically disabled. Those able to work should be subject to willingness-to-work tests through a public day-labor market. ("Offering everyone work is the most obvious test" to distinguish those who "act selfishly, taking advantage of those around them" from those who "either cannot help themselves or are trying to do so and simply need an opportunity.") In return for a day's work, a person would get a voucher for one night in a cubicle hotel and three meals, plus "a dollar or two for spending money." Such a proposal might get some homeless single adults off the streets, but surely wouldn't begin to create a route out of homelessness.

Despite a brief paragraph earlier in the book pooh-poohing the idea that a decline in the work ethic caused the increase in homelessness, Jencks's work-test proposal and the composite psychology that emerges from his portrait of homeless people's choices suggest that the trouble with a lot of homeless adults might be a deficiency of moral character. Liebow, by contrast, is adamant that a deficient work ethic is not the problem. He devotes a whole chapter to the many single homeless women who toil in dreary jobs, but for whom work simply can never be a way out of homelessness, both because the pay is so low and because jobs for homeless people are never secure. "It is not the worker but the workplace that undermines the work ethic," he concludes. "Unemployment undermines the work ethic. So do jobs that are dirty and hard and boring and low status and lead nowhere. But the real killers of the work ethic are those jobs that do not pay enough to live on." Liebow finds a certain moral fortitude in the women who go to work every day, come home to a shelter, sometimes pound the pavement looking for new jobs they know will not pay enough to get them out of the shelters, endure the disdain of co-workers and employment agencies simply because they are homeless, yet who still refuse to consider taking public assistance, and still remain unembittered by social service workers who sermonize in lieu of helping: "The answer, you'll find, is within you."

Jencks is far more sympathetic toward women with children and the mentally ill than he is to most homeless single adults. Welfare reform is essential to solving the housing problem for poor mothers, he insists, because current welfare policies simply fail to recognize the high cost of child care and the consequent economic value of caring for one's own children. He calls for expanded Earned Income Tax Credits for the working poor, and for lower per-family subsidies in the HUD rent-subsidy program so that the same pot of money can help more families. He would also restore some of the former power of doctors to commit the mentally ill to institutions, and he would vastly increase the money and services available to the mentally ill and their families.

Jencks and Liebow offer two visions of social science, one emphasizing the science and the other emphasizing the social. We need them both. Jencks's book, widely acclaimed as exemplary hard-nosed social science, suggests as well the twin dangers of doing a science of "others," of people not like us social scientists. One can become so preoccupied with science and generalization that one loses touch with the reality of how others think, feel and act. And one can become so committed to science that one forgets or gets confused about the political messages conveyed along with any social research. Liebow's book reveals far more about homelessness and provides a more accurate psychology of homeless people, notwithstanding its focus on homeless single women. But for all the clarity of its political message, all the persuasiveness of its passionate engagement, it suggests limitations of another kind—the difficulty of translating humanistic social science into next steps.

In small-town New Hampshire the next steps are easy. Neighbors and friends know what to do: they have rehearsed barn raisings, church suppers and other fund-raisers for two centuries. More importantly, when someone is made homeless, there are neighbors and friends who go into action. Liebow's book, while not in any sense nostalgic, is profoundly rooted in the same impulse that makes a newspaper in New Hampshire do a story on a homeless family. What Liebow is really up to is turning some homeless women into our neighbors and friends. He is not fool enough to seek a restoration of small communities as a solution to homelessness. He is smart enough to know that we—we who profess to be so disturbed by the sight of people sleeping on the sidewalk, we who hold the power to give people homes—we will not be moved to act unless we come to regard homeless people as our neighbors.

DEBORAH STONE holds the David R. Pokross chair in law and social policy at Brandeis University and is senior editor of *The American Prospect.*

# *The Troublemaker*

**BY C. VANN WOODWARD**

## Mencken: A Life by Fred Hobson

**(Random House, 672 pp., $35)**

Another biography of Mencken? And this one seventy years after the first, with a couple of dozen books about him between the first and the last, most of them either biography or to some extent biographical. Not to mention Mencken's numerous memoirs and autobiographical works, the last of which was published only last year. What possible justification, then, for another biography in 1994, and this one the largest of all?

Fred Hobson, the new biographer, and the author of an earlier book on Mencken and the South, offers some persuasive answers to that question. Put briefly, Mencken planned it this way. He spent most of the ten years before his incapacitating stroke in 1948 "preparing to die," and much of that went into sorting his enormous hoard of unpublished private papers and manuscripts so as to have them released posthumously by categories at specific intervals. In 1971 there was the opening of his correspondence over half a century with the major American writers of his time. In 1981 his most secret manuscripts were released, including the 2,100-page diary of the eighteen years before his stroke. In 1991, right on schedule, came still more unpublished manuscripts, including "My Life As Author and Editor," which was published last year.

Each of these decennial revelations, some more than others and the diary most of all, was the occasion of a Menckenian resurrection. If he had planned a literary life after death, he could hardly have done better. "A posthumous revival," as Hobson says, "is indeed an



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appropriate form of immortality for a man who professed to believe in no other kind." At least one good reason for a new biographer is that no previous one had been able to exploit these newly available sources.

It was a heroic undertaking. In his diary Mencken wrote that there was "probably no trace in history of a writer who left more careful accounts of himself and his contemporaries"—and he might have added "more voluminous." Not only were there the thousands of pages of manuscript recently opened, along with the correspondence (Mencken estimated in 1940 that he himself had written more than 100,000 letters), but also the mountainous consequences of a compulsion to save everything, many boxes of it. For thirty-five years he subscribed to a clipping service that filled great piles of bound scrapbooks with any press item about him. And along with these were oddities such as grade reports from school days, bank statements, hotel receipts, medical reports—on and on. This is not to mention his published work—more than 10 million words in print, according to Mencken himself. Nor is it to mention the publications and such private papers of his friends and enemies as proved available.

Mastering these materials was only part of the biographer's task. Among the remaining parts were reconciling the public Mencken with the private Mencken, his volubility about his impressions with his reticence about his feelings, his openness about some things with his silence about others. His biographer had to learn how to cope with "strategies of concealment" and how to be on guard against "posthumous image management." The compulsive hoarder of records was also a selective destroyer of records, especially of what he called "personal letters" from women and intimate friends. Destruction joined silence as one of his strategies. This was a man of multiple paradoxes, inconsistencies and ambiguities. It would be no easy task to discover the real Mencken.

There may be more to learn, but Hobson has served us well in advancing beyond any previous effort our understanding of one of the most enigmatic figures of importance in the history of American letters. The book is done in the best narrative tradition of biography. If evidence is conflicting or opinions are biased, the reader is so informed. If there are passionate differences of opinion about where Mencken stood on issues such as anti-Semitism and Hitler, both sides are fully stated, along with the author's own views, which are usually more sympathetic than not to Mencken. Always cautious about generalization and interpretation, Hobson never ventures any broad theories of psychology or motivation. What he discloses, however, is quite likely to provoke ventures in explanation.

Burdened with less caution (and less information), I should like to venture something in the way of a theory to account for prominent traits of the Mencken personality, especially his furious drive for hard work and achievement. His only regret, Mencken said, was that he had not worked harder. The term that most readily occurs to me to characterize the motives that drove him so relentlessly is "compensatory." There were plenty of deprivations in Mencken's life and background for which to compensate, to counterbalance.

Mencken was born in Baltimore in 1880 not far from the grave of Edgar Allan Poe and the birthplace of Babe Ruth, the two most famous Baltimoreans, and he lived there all his life. The city had many German immigrants whom Mencken scorned as "peasants" or "petty tradesmen" and carefully avoided. Later he resorted to a different strategy to overcome the Germanic stigma and the obscurity of his American relatives. This was the celebration of forebears of his name in the old country who, since the seventeenth century, had produced


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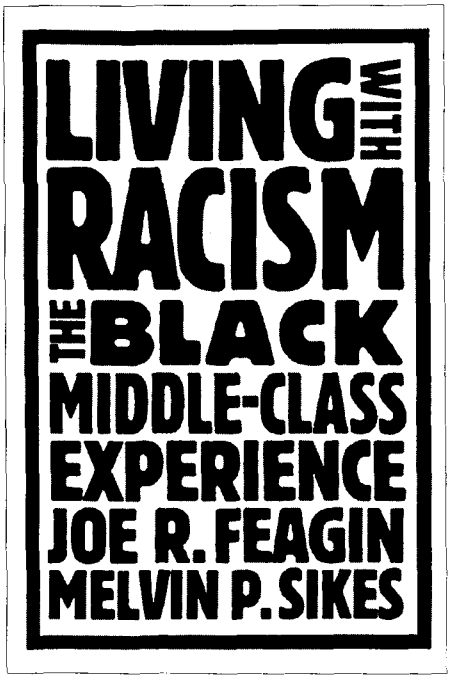


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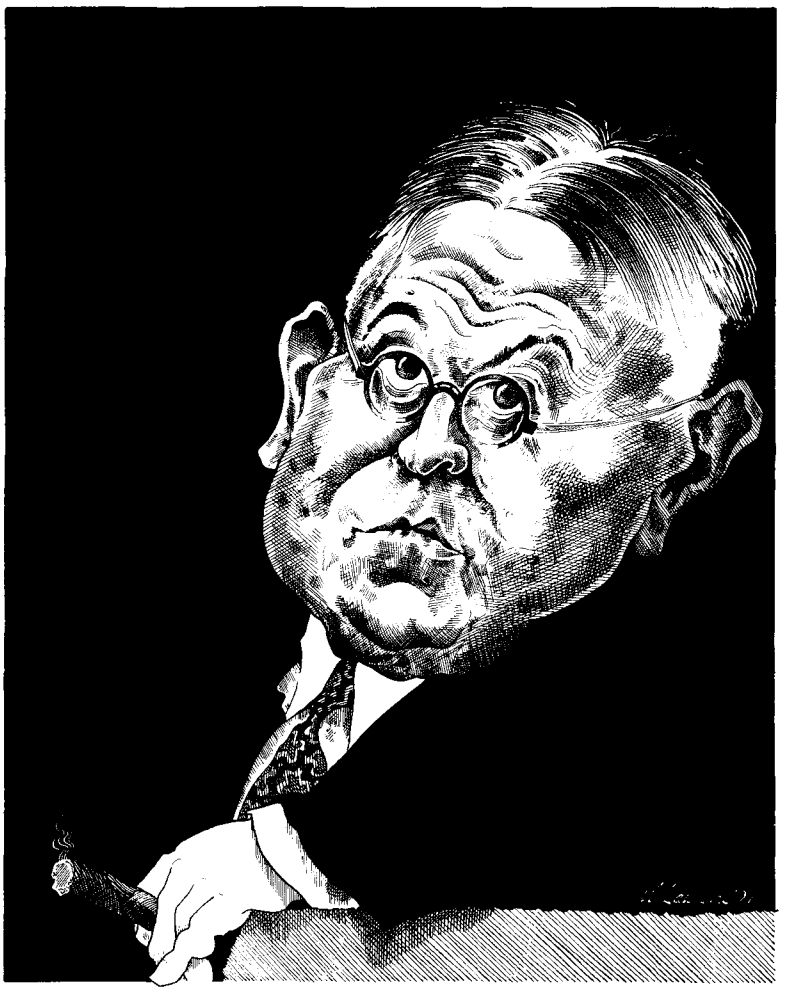
distinguished *Gelehrten*, clergymen, Leipzig professors and writers. He went so far as to translate and to publish a satire written in 1715 by one of them, *The Charlatanry of the Learned*—which, incidentally, satisfied another compensatory need, his scorn for pedagogues. Those needs were served also by the publication of his book *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* in 1908.

The book got a mixed reception and has not stood up well in the long run under scholarly criticism. But as the first book on Nietzsche in English it earned a place of significance in the intellectual life of the time. While not uncritical of Nietzsche's faults and self-contradictions, Mencken clearly found in his work a kindred spirit. Here was the supreme idoloclast, "king of all axiom smashers and the arch dissenter of the age." Moreover, Mencken saw in him the superior Germany with which he identified, as against the peasants and philistine immigrants from whom he sought to distance himself.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The root of Mencken's compensatory strivings was his schooling, or more precisely the education that he was denied. After grade school, where he proved a star pupil, and before he was 12, his father entered Henry in what was then called the Baltimore Manual Training School. The boy lacked any interest or dexterity in mechanics, and he later described the school building as "extraordinarily hideous." On the side he took up painting and piano lessons. But it was his daily visits to the Enoch Pratt Free Library between 1893 and 1898, and his reading of three to five books per week, that account, Mencken said, for "whatever education I may be said to have." His reading was mainly in the English classics.

The next blow that the elder Mencken struck, after dismissing the thought of university education, was to put the younger Mencken to work in the family cigar factory, and to promote him to bookkeeper, and then to salesman. Henry particularly loathed the latter position. He contemplated both rebellion and suicide. At this critical point, August Mencken suddenly died. Eighteen at the time, Henry professed grief for his father, but he admitted much later to a friend that "his death was the luckiest thing that ever happened to me."

Very soon after the funeral Henry applied to the city editor of the Baltimore *Morning Herald* for a job, and a month or so later began to get assignments, without pay for five months and then for the sum of $7 per week: "the maddest, gladdest, damnedest existence ever enjoyed by mortal youth," he believed. He quickly climbed the promotion ladder. He was given a weekly column on the editorial page at 20, and at 25 joined the staff of the more sedate *Sun* papers of the city. The association lasted for forty years.

All very well, but there remained some compensatory matters to settle in early manhood. "The respectable bourgeois youngsters of my generation were college freshmen," he wrote; but while they were being "affronted by balderdash daily" from "chalky pedagogues," he was "at large in a wicked seaport," richly instructed "in a hundred giddy arenas, none of them in schools." When he thought of the professions that benefitted from the academic balderdash or the family money and enjoyed the status that news scribblers were denied, Mencken's scorn took on a sharp edge. The businessman was "the only man above the hangman and the scavenger who is forever apologizing for his profession." Lawyers carried on "idiotic buffoonery with writs, injunctions, mandamuses and appeals." The clergy, especially "Methodists, United Brethren, Baptists and such vermin," he dismissed with contempt. Politicians were "rogues and vagabonds, frauds and scoundrels." Professors come in for regular drubbings. Historians were chiefly "third-rate men." The medical profession won some respect, but even it was full of quacks.

For all that, he was still a newspaper reporter himself, and far from the literary lion with world fame that he aspired to be. He was already selling stories and poems to popular magazines, and when he was 23 he subscribed to the clipping service, but this was not enough. At about that time, with encouragement from New York editors, he made an important career change: he abandoned fiction and poetry for literary and social criticism of the iconoclastic kind. His main inspiration was George Bernard Shaw, and in 1905 he published a book on the playwright, his first. His second, three years later, was the book on Nietzsche, another iconoclast. Neither work sold much, but the books gained some of what Mencken most desperately sought—attention.

Suddenly he found himself in *Who's Who*, and, to his amusement, widely identified by reviewers with the Johns Hopkins University. Off to Europe to celebrate, he sought out Menckestrasse in Leipzig, a street named for one of his ancestors. More Anglophile than Germanophile at that time, he took greater pleasure in the London haunts of his literary heroes. Back home, he soon became a local celebrity as Baltimore's Bad Boy, his "free-lance" column in the



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*Sun* devoted to "stirring up the animals." Seeking wider notice, he turned out a few hack-job books of no importance save for their role in starting a lifelong friendship with Theodore Dreiser. In 1908 the novelist gained entry for him as reviewer for *The Smart Set*, a racy New York monthly. In the next fifteen years Mencken reviewed some 2,000 books, becoming known and sometimes feared by virtually every important American writer of the period and many abroad. Young Henry reveled in the notoriety—there was correspondence with Ezra Pound, James Joyce, James Branch Cabell, H. G. Wells, and from "the greatest of them all," Joseph Conrad, came a long friendly letter.

In 1914 Mencken and George Jean Nathan, his associate on the staff, took over editorship of *The Smart Set*, and the quality of its contributors picked up. The generation weaned on that journal has now been laid to rest. But there are still a few of us around who cut our teeth on its successor, *The American Mercury*, and remember racing to the college library for the latest greenback number in order to know what to think and whom to be the first to quote. The 1920s were Mencken's great years. They started off grandly with *The American Language*, his most impressive and durable work, followed by the six hilarious volumes of *Prejudices*, all to the drum beat of what Pound called the "Murkn Mercury."

In 1926 Walter Lippmann reluctantly pronounced Mencken the most powerful influence on educated Americans of the time, and the young Edmund Wilson called him "a satiric creative artist of a very high order." One editor proclaimed him "dictator of American letters." Others debated whether he might best be known as "America's Dr. Johnson," its Voltaire, or its Swift, while a Justice Department official had no doubt he was a Bolshevik. In the middle of the decade came the famous "Monkey Trial" of the Tennessee teacher of evolution, in which William Jennings Bryan aided the prosecution. It was Mencken's show throughout, the means of alerting the unlettered, the fundamentalists and the Rotarians to the Baltimore menace. His main purpose was not to defend the teacher but to "make a fool out of Bryan."

Denying he was ever their leader, Mencken later saw himself as a symbol of "the revolt of postwar youth against the old American certainties." As a member of the class of 1930, I can testify that Mencken firmly held that role and the blind devotion of his collegiate followers through that year. But after 1930 they began to fall out of step, and to disavow their allegiance. They found numerous reasons. The conservatism that he inherited from his father became more conspicuous. He refused to admit that a Great Depression existed, and he opposed any remedial measures of the New Deal as "socialism." His quarrel with Franklin Roosevelt took a personal and venomous turn that Hobson believes "helped to distance him from an entire generation of intellectuals and writers," many of them old friends and admirers.

The old tone of gleeful mockery and satire was replaced by one of spleen and bitterness. He lost interest in new writers, dismissed Eliot and Joyce and ignored William Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. Yet his own writing flourished. There appeared his *Treatise on the Gods* in 1930, and in 1934 his *Treatise on Right and Wrong*. Mencken aspired to make the first of these "the damnedest book ever written," and his biographer calls it "his most ambitious book." Displaying a remarkable command of theological works and the Scriptures, this unbeliever explored the origin of religion not only as a historian but also as an anthropologist. While he occasionally revealed his antagonism to Christianity, he pronounced Judeo-Christianity "vastly superior to any other religion" by virtue of its "lovely poetry." His treatise on morals served as a sequel to the one on the gods


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and followed its pattern of organization, but it lacked the flair of the earlier work. A prominent conclusion was that honor was superior to morality as a guide to conduct. The unfavorable reception, however, probably owed more to the state of Mencken's popular reputation—which was low at the time—than to the merits of the book. Yet in the same period came the three light volumes of memoirs, *Happy Days, Newspaper Days* and *Heathen Days*, and his rich supplements to *The American Language*.

A cheerleader for the German cause in the First World War, Mencken retained the allegiance as the Second World War drew on. He regretted that his grandfather had ever left Saxony. He could call Germany "the only civilized country left in the world" in 1933, and in 1938 he returned for a visit in quest of genealogy and the old Germany, not the new. Hobson has no doubt that "Mencken was firmly and unequivocally against Hitler," but he finds no satisfactory excuse for his failure to speak out publicly against the dictator. His position on the Nazis continued to be debated, and even more heatedly the charge of anti-Semitism.

He was made to appear both the best friend and the worst enemy of the Jews. Mencken's defenders stressed his many devoted Jewish friends, including his publisher, Alfred Knopf, and his co-editor, George Jean Nathan, not to mention a mistress of nine years. The defenders also cited his eloquent praise of Jewish culture and literature; and some of them observed that his criticism of Jews never approached the harshness of his tirades against poor Southern whites. His opponents, however, found useful evidence to the contrary on all these claims. The debate has never been settled, and it was revived by the recent publication of the Mencken diary, edited by Charles A. Fecher. A one-time admirer of his subject, Fecher wrote in his introduction, "Let it be said at once, clearly and unequivocally: Mencken was an anti-Semite." Deliberately paraphrasing Fecher, however, Joseph Epstein followed up by declaring "clearly and unequivocally" that "Mencken was no anti-Semite, no enemy of the Jews." For my part, I find the arguments of his defenders more persuasive than those of his critics. On another racial issue, though, the evidence was clearer: Mencken sought out and welcomed all the black writers of talent he could find and entertained some of them in his home.

Suspected of disloyalty during World War II, Mencken came under government investigation, but he was not harassed by superpatriots as he had been in World War I. Still, it is only fair to point out that the 1930s and 1940s dealt the Sage of Baltimore some cruel blows. He lost his mother, his wife, his health and much of his public. In spite of his numerous satiric slurs against marriage, and his far more numerous slurs against Southerners, he married Sara Haardt from the Deep South when he was 50, and was blissfully happy; and then he watched her fade with recurrent illness and die in five years. His first light stroke in 1939 plunged him into obsessive worry about his own health. The stroke that he feared more than death and did not wish to survive came nearly a decade later, though he lingered on for another seven tragic years.

His posthumous life did not await the one Mencken had planned. It began

## *Lago di Como: The Cypresses*

*Cupressus lusitanica*,
The species name, and factual
Probes in an old *Britannica*
Confirm they came from Portugal.

Greeks, too, arrived as immigrants
And planted olives at their side,
A Mediterranean romance
Green long after Greek had died.

The drawback? Immobility,
Yet breezes tell a different story:
A thing with roots can still go free
Through intervention of allegory—

Which sends it on a breeze-born glide,
As buried souls wake up again,
Proud to have been requalified.
Tall, tapering, and midnight green,

They stand as trees did once for them,
Anonymous memorials,
Perennial, too, and yet pro tem,
In soil thought through by human skulls.

When the trees seem to tremble (much
As their Lisbon cousins would have done
In the great earthquake), only a Dutch
Painter would try to render one.

I'm satisfied to watch as light
Begins to slant and breezes fall.
In shade as dark as minor night,
They hear my tentative footfall,

And give a welcome neither Greek
Nor Portugese, a country drawl
Seasoned without being antique:
"Come join our ranks for the long haul,

Something you've never done before—
Though mounting duty's no endeavor
For the weak-kneed, you know. What's more,
The term of service runs forever."

In the distance I see a small van go
Speeding away with passengers,
Who might say "We're not ready," though
What happens happens when *it* prefers.

Becalmed a moment, the trees will soon
Return to their colloquium,
Branches billowing toward the moon
Risen over Elysium.

**ALFRED CORN**



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immediately, with the obituaries, pro and con: homages to pay, scores to settle. Almost nobody was neutral; and the obituaries and editorials written by some foes fairly gloated over his demise. Charles Angoff, a former employee, nursing ten years of accumulated grievance and hatreds, vented them in a biography picturing his old employer as thoroughly despicable.

The defense, however, was fully prepared—not least by the departed himself, or his ghost. As if timed for the purpose, Mencken's *Minority Report* was published shortly after his death, answering many of the anticipated attacks with all his old vigor. In the next two years four friendly collections of his work appeared. Knopf proved the staunchest of many defenders, including some of the several women who had adored and pursued him. The old Mencken Brotherhood of intellectuals (not to forget the sisters) maintained early loyalties through their remaining years, always ready to come to his defense. In all probability the millions of the "boobocracy" who had suffered under the barrage of Mencken's epithets—buffoons, imbeciles, barbarians, quacks, frauds, "hawkers of palpable nonsense"—clung as tenaciously to their resentments as long as they lived.

The reassessment began when a newer generation discovered that the sage had regularly violated the present-day code of political and verbal correctness. Not long ago, for example, this magazine published a searing assault by the reputable critic Garry Wills, titled "The Ugly American" and illustrated by a hideous caricature. Mencken certainly had his unappealing traits and they were apparent to more than the "boobs," as we have seen. His prose style was indeed "hyperbolic" and some quirks of his personality now appear "adolescent"; and his racial epithets were unacceptable.

Attacks of this sort have been denounced as "generational chauvinism." To be sure, each generation must be free to make its own assessment of bygone critics. But it is often forgotten that the old critic, the one being rejected as irrelevant or worse, was addressing the absurdities of his own time, not those of the time that came after him. There can be no doubt, at least in the mind of one brought up among them, that there were in the America of the 1920s plenty of absurdities to be addressed, exposed, satirized, ridiculed, denounced. And they were so prevalent, so firmly fixed in the public credo and so often defended by church, state, the law and the respectable professions, that to be heard against them, or even to gain passing attention, the critic had to speak at the top of his voice.

In some circumstances the critic has to shock. In Mencken's circumstances hyperbole was not enough to penetrate the complacency and the smugness, the priggishness and the conformity, the fundamentalism and the imbecility. American life was walled-up and embattled in provincialism, not only that of the South, but also that of New England, of California and of the vast midlands in between. A critic who summoned up the courage required for the telling of the truth about his America surely deserves more than scorn and derision in American annals.•

# *French Revolutions*

**By Paul Berman**

## Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France by Sunil Khilnani

**(Yale University Press, 264 pp., $30)**

## The Lives of Michel Foucault by David Macey

**(Pantheon, 599 pp., $30)**

Is there One Big Explanation, or only 1,000 small explanations, for the enormous influence that French intellectuals have exercised around the world for so many generations? In his very lucid and useful book, Sunil Khilnani, a lecturer in politics at Birkbeck College, London, devotes himself to describing the ins and outs of modern French political philosophy, and he never does get around to laying out the One Big or the many small explanations that might account for the global importance of his own topic. But the stimulating quality of his book is such that, as I turned his pages, One Big Explanation lumbered upward from his narrative even so. It was Hannah Arendt's from thirty years ago, still applicable, more persuasive today than ever before.

The worldwide influence of the French intellectuals, in her account, descends from an oddly complementary relation between America's 1776 and France's 1789. The American Revolution was a political success, which showed the world that feudal systems could be overthrown and proper foundations for freedom, in her phrase, could be laid, if the Founders went about their task in the right spirit. But intellectually the American Revolution was less impressive. The vast sagacity and learning of the American founders generated a legal and constitutional literature. But it did not generate the sort of wide-ranging literature of revolution and democratic society and the meaning of these things for a worried world that could be easily studied in other countries or even in this one. The Founders led a fine revolution, but the result was much action, little dialogue, like a chase movie.

The French Revolution went in the other direction. Politically it was mostly a failure. But precisely because of the calamities and heartbreaks that resulted, the French writers pored obsessively over the arts and science of revolution, and kept asking what a revolution is supposed to be, and what is a proper revolutionary aim and how can things go better next time. This made the French Revolution a gigantic intellectual success. Readers around the world who were contemplating a leap by their own feudal and oppressed societies into a better future had good reason to turn to the French authors for a discussion of every relevant issue.

What the readers found in those French writings was, of course, sometimes very peculiar, and got more so as the years went on. Khilnani reminds us that French thinking on the subject of revolution was powerfully twisted by the third of the world's great revolutions: Lenin's in Russia. French writers who were dedicated to praising the achievements of their own revolution now interpreted Jacobinism as a precursor to Bolshevism, which distorted the meaning of the 1790s but did seem to testify to the



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universal significance and ultimate success of the French events. Khilnani's history of these discussions begins after the Second World War, at a time when the French Communist Party, in the full blush of Stalinism, controlled 35 percent of the national vote in France and dominated the intellectuals, who should have known better, and did know better, in cankered corners of their left-wing hearts.

But as Khilnani shows, communism's appeal followed logically (more or less) from the Bolshevik interpretation of the French Revolution. Soviet greatness seemed to prove France's. To feel, as Sartre once said, that "the worker has two countries, his own, and the Republic of Soviet Russia," was almost patriotic on the part of the French. The distinguished role played by the French Communists in the wartime resistance (once the Soviet Union had entered the war) only bolstered the historical identification of Jacobins and Bolsheviks. And so the discussion of revolution and modernity that radiated outward to the world with such powerful influence from the postwar French writers took on a fateful tint of ardent sympathy, sometimes nuanced, sometimes not, for the Soviet project.

Khilnani's description of the postwar left-wing intellectuals focuses mainly on Sartre and Louis Althusser, who divided between them the chief French versions of the Marxist tradition. Sartre's brand was Olympian, humanist, Hegelian, drawn to the Young Marx, fitfully pro-Communist but anti-institutional. Althusser's brand was scientific, anti-humanist, Leninist instead of Hegelian, drawn to the Old Marx, institutionally committed to Party membership and academic affiliation. How stimulating and profound, how hugely important those differences once seemed! But that was always an error. For it's hard to see in retrospect what possible interest might lie in exploring the alternative emphases on the Young Marx versus the Old Marx or any of those other once-crucial-seeming distinctions, if the differing interpretations in the hands of these philosophers turned out, as they did, to be 95 percent deaf (Althusser) or 90 percent deaf (Sartre) to the meaning of Marxism in power.

The purpose of reading Sartre or Althusser on Marxism today is only to discover the ways that brilliance can deceive itself. Khilnani, it must be said, is not the first historian to lower the boom on the postwar French leftists. Last year Tony Judt published a book with a similar argument called *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956*, and his book was fiercer and more vivid. But Khilnani's achievement is to drive onward through the '50s and '60s into the era that began in 1968, when the pro-Communist understanding of revolution finally came under general assault in France.

This, for American readers, is the most interesting part of the story. Yet it has not previously been told, at least not in detail. There had always been conservative and liberal criticisms of communism in France, but the assault that now proved to be effective came instead from the far left, along four lines of attack. You might even say that one of the great achievements of the French intellectual left was to undermine, in the name of left-wing values, the Communist orientation that was itself a product of the left.

The first of these attacks, the most classically left-wing, came from the ex-Trotskyists Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort in the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie*, beginning in the late 1940s. The *Socialisme ou barbarie* group was the French equivalent of the tiny currents of opinion that emerged out of Max Shachtman's wing of Trotskyism in the United States. There was even a bit of trans-Atlantic mutual influence between the French and American tendencies, though this is a theme that Khilnani leaves untouched. During the '50s and into the early '60s, Castoriadis's group seemed to have no influence at all in France, but the student uprising of 1968 was a festival of the avant-garde, and in the world of Marxism nothing was more avant-garde than *Socialisme ou barbarie*, and Castoriadis's combination of libertarian revolution and vehement anti-communism turned out to be immensely influential among the student revolutionaries. That was one reason why the '68 uprisings, which seemed to outside observers to be a great forward step for communism, turned out instead to be crucial in breaking communism's power in France.

A second criticism came from the younger writers who had begun as Maoists, and in some cases as Althusser's students, but who ended up, after Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* was published in 1974, as anti-Communists pure and simple. These were the New Philosophers, whose newness came mostly from drawing together inspirations that were fairly old. The New Philosophers combined the moral fury of Solzhenitsyn, the anti-totalitarian analyses of Castoriadis and Lefort, the anti-Hegelianism of Karl Popper, a few inspirations from religion, and a good deal of ex-Maoist, chest-beating remorse in the style that Khilnani calls "penitential." Khilnani is not especially impressed with the insights or profundity of the New Philosophers, with the exception of André Glucksmann, the brightest of the group. But the New Philosophers had a talent for television talk-show appearances and self-promotion, which led to influence. Castoriadis and Lefort were interesting thinkers, but the New Philosophers were good popularizers.

A third influence that turned the French against communism came from Michel Foucault—which is yet another story that has not, until now, been properly told. Here it is useful to supplement Khilnani's account with the new biography of Foucault by the British intellectual historian, David Macey. Macey's book is a cautious and conventional account of Foucault's doings, written with admirable expertise and a keen spirit of defensiveness, as might be expected from a biography that has been duly "authorized" by the subject's surviving companion, Daniel Defert. Foucault, too, was the subject of a book last year: James Miller's *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, a very fine biography that offered a more convincing portrait of Foucault the man and the thinker. But Macey's attention to day-to-day events yields a vivid picture of Foucault the political activist, especially in the early 1970s, when the great philosopher plunged into a radical campaign for prison reform. This was a courageous and admirable campaign. There was an aspect of it, much downplayed by Macey, that was deluded, too, due to Foucault's participation in the extreme-left political hysterias of the time and his alliance with the Maoists.

Still, when those same Maoists veered into anti-communism, Foucault veered as well, without any of the attention-getting scenes of chest-beating penitential agony. Foucault's greatest philosophical and historical insights always came from the sympathy he intuitively felt for the totally oppressed, for the victims of mass incarceration and of abusive psychiatrists. Sympathy of that kind was the motive behind his prison reform activism in the early '70s, too. And since Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag* was nothing if not the greatest protest against prison systems and mass incarceration ever written, it was natural for Foucault, as a theorist of total oppression, to keep on following Glucksmann and the Maoists in their new enthusiasm for Russian *zeks* and the other victims of communism.

Foucault's contribution to the anti-Communist mood was practical, as well. He was one of the intellectuals in France who noisily defended Polish Solidarity during the period when the Socialist government held back from doing so in



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order not to antagonize its allies among the French Communists. At the moment of his death, he was planning to join a boat in the South Seas to go rescue Vietnamese refugees. And since Foucault was widely seen as the most brilliant and prestigious French thinker since Sartre, the meaning of these protests for intellectual opinion was very great.

In Khilnani's judgment, the deepest and most important of the French arguments against communism was made, however, by François Furet, the historian of the French Revolution. It might seem odd for an academic historian to play a bigger role than any of the critics of contemporary politics, except that, in Khilnani's analysis, the interpretation of the French Revolution always held the key to French attitudes toward communism. In his early work Furet criticized the Communist interpretation of the French Revolution for being inadequately faithful to the genius of Marx, which is to say that Furet, too, initiated his anti-communism from a position left of the Communists themselves.

But finally he took the old equation between Jacobins and Bolsheviks and simply stood it on its head. If the Bolsheviks were totalitarians, so were the Jacobins. If the Bolshevik Revolution was a disaster, so was the Jacobin aspect of the French Revolution. The successful part of the French Revolution was, instead, its constitutional commitment to representative democracy—its "republican" component. And the effect of this argument by Furet, coming as it did on the heels of the anti-totalitarian leftists, the New Philosophers and Foucault's analysis of total oppression, was a sweeping revision in the way intellectual opinion in France has come to look on its own founding revolution and on the nature of political democracy.

"The French Revolution ringingly described itself as the bearer of democratic rights and liberties," Khilnani writes:

> But the revolution—and the left it created—proved to be the best enemy of these values. Democracy in its constitutional representative form—the only form in which inhabitants of the modern political world are ever likely to be durably acquainted with it—remained in quite fundamental respects unpracticed, untheorized and unloved in France. To the intellectual left, constitutional representative democracy, "bourgeois" or "formal" democracy, was a contemptible and mystifying illusion; only beginning in the late 1970s did it gradually come to be accepted as a political form in its own right, and not merely an illicit simulation of "true," direct or revolutionary democracy.

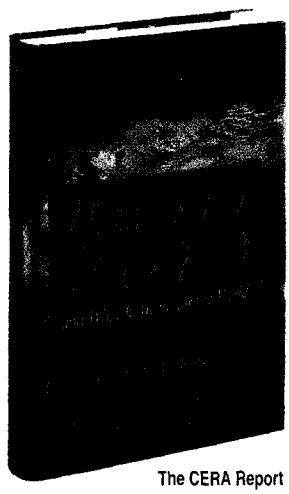
Whether the new, post-Communist judgments of the French intellectuals are to be admired is another question. At the end of last year's *Past Imperfect*, Judt shook his head in disapproval at the newly fashionable liberalism among the younger French intellectuals, whose understanding of liberalism seemed to him to be fatally compromised by Jacobin holdovers. Khilnani offers the same opinion. In his view the French intellectuals, for all the merit in their recent revisions, have still not managed to understand what the Jacobins, too, could never understand, which was the mechanisms of democratic representation.

To show how badly the French understand these things, he points to the fiasco of European unification, in which a great deal of power was going to be invested in Brussels and still other powers in the Bundesbank. I can't say if Khilnani is right about the current discussion, but let us suppose that he is. It would mean that, even after 200 years, no one has been able to combine the spectacular theoretical virtues of French intellectual discussion with the humble practical virtues of Anglo-American liberal understanding. Maybe a little more time is needed?

PAUL BERMAN is a fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities.


**"Read the book, cross your fingers, and hope for the best."**

—Peter Galuszka, BUSINESS WEEK



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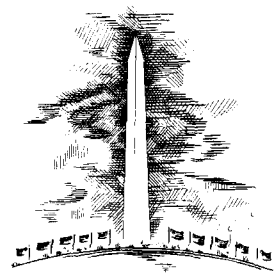
# WASHINGTON DIARIST

## Vivid air

MY READING BEGAN WITH *THE Longest Day*, Cornelius Ryan's classic account of what the Normandy invasion was like for the grunts who actually fought on June 6, 1944. I quickly followed with a book by two Brits who had also interviewed D-Day veterans. Finishing that, I bought a picture book on the invasion. Then I struck gold—a D-Day map, specially produced by Michelin. Two weeks before the anniversary I got a copy of historian Stephen Ambrose's blockbuster, *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II.* I read it hungrily. The pretext for all this research was that I'd be able to tell my younger kids, 12 and 9 years old, about D-Day. President Clinton was right when he said: "Too many Americans do not know what that [D-Day] generation did." But in truth, I wanted to know about D-Day, everything about it, for myself. I'd become a D-Day enthusiast. I hate to be self-referential about the greatest day of the twentieth century, but I'm hardly alone in finding D-Day singularly inspiring. My kids, however, didn't get quite as excited. Giving me the brush-off, my son, Freddy, said, "Dad, I've got basketball cards. You've got D-Day."

I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WAS when President Kennedy was shot, but I recall the moment I became interested in D-Day. It was June 6, 1984. I was covering the California presidential primary (Mondale vs. Hart), staying at the Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles. I turned on CNN that morning and President Reagan was speaking live in Normandy at a fortieth anniversary celebration. It wasn't his famous Pointe de Hoc speech, delivered the same day, in which, quoting a poem by Stephen Spender, he said Army Rangers who scaled a 100-foot cliff had "left the vivid air signed with your honor." The speech I saw on T.V. was given at the Omaha Beach Memorial. Reagan spoke about a letter he'd gotten from a young woman, Lisa Zanatta, whose father had fought his way ashore on D-Day. The father had wanted to bring her back to Normandy, show her the beach, talk about D-Day, make her proud of him. He wanted the courage and sacrifice of those who fought to be remembered. But he'd died and thus never made the trip with his daughter. Reagan read from her letter. The T.V. camera flashed to Lisa, sitting in the audience, crying. "We will always remember," Reagan said. "We will always be proud. We will always be prepared, so we may always be free." I was thunderstruck. Tears rolled from my eyes. It was an incredibly moving speech, patriotic but not jingoistic. The speech was so effective it was used in a film shown at the 1984 Republican convention. Watching that film, tears welled in my eyes again.



D-DAY HAS A VISCERAL impact on a certain generation: men in their late 30s, 40s or early 50s. It's not that they regret having missed the chance to participate. They're not D-Day wannabes. Instead, D-Day stirs breathtaking awe and respect for the young soldiers involved. I remain amazed at their unflinching devotion to duty, charging into battle despite a high likelihood of being killed or wounded. Ambrose points out that of the 10,000 American paratroopers assigned to jump behind German lines in the hours before the beach landings, only eight refused to go. British historian John Keegan writes, in *The Six Armies of Normandy*, that the eight chose "to face the savage disciplinary consequences and total social ignominy of remaining with the aeroplane to stepping into the darkness of the Normandy night." But it wasn't fear of social stigma that prompted all the others to jump. Though terrified, they were ready and willing. They wanted to be part of a great crusade, and they were. Reading about D-Day veterans, seeing them talk on T.V. about their experiences—it's bound to make Americans emotional and proud, especially men who grew up in the postwar era. Practically every adult male I've talked to gets excited about D-Day. I broached the subject with Harry Smith, co-anchor of "CBS This Morning," and he couldn't stop talking. He knew a lot more about D-Day than I did. Tom Brokaw, reporting from Normandy on June 6, confessed he loved all the D-Day stuff. I understood exactly.

GUESS WHO ELSE IS A D-DAY AFIcionado? President Clinton. He read the books by Ambrose and Ryan, ate dinner with a group of World War II historians and generally wallowed in D-Day lore. All this served him well in his speeches at Normandy. The media blowout on D-Day—network specials, commemorative sections of newspapers and magazines, wall-to-wall coverage of fiftieth anniversary events on June 6—might have created a problem for Clinton, given his avoidance of the draft. He escaped trouble by delivering a memorable speech near where Reagan had spoken in 1984. White House aides played down the comparison with Reagan. But it was inevitable, since Clinton emulated Reagan. He spoke of Frank Elliott, killed on D-Day, and T.V. cameras showed Elliott's daughter, Deronda, in the crowd. And, pointing Reaganesquely to the veterans in the audience, Clinton declared, "Let us never forget when they were young, these men saved the world." Clinton's only slip was an interview in which he said he didn't regret opposing the Vietnam war and had occasionally wished he'd served in the military, if only the right war had occurred. Come to think of it, Clinton is a D-Day wannabe.

A WEEK BEFORE THE FIFTIETH anniversary I thought I'd found a way to tell my daughter Grace about D-Day. I read her a passage from Ambrose's book about Lt. Robert Mason Mathias of the 82nd Airborne. He was a devout Catholic who never swore, but also was the best boxer in his regiment. When one of his men faltered on a competitive training hike against other platoons, Mathias carried him the last three-quarters of a mile. On D-Day Mathias was about to parachute into Normandy, with his men to follow, when flak burst outside the plane and a piece of shrapnel tore through his chest. He was knocked off his feet, but he pulled himself up and back into the doorway. Mathias could have stepped aside, let his men jump and returned to England "in time for a life-saving operation," Ambrose writes. At this point I choked up, knowing what would come next. I couldn't go on for nearly a minute. "Instead," Ambrose writes, "Mathias raised his right arm, called out, 'Follow me!' and leaped into the night." A half-hour later, he was found on the ground, still in his chute, dead. "He was the first American officer killed by German fire on D-Day." With that, I told my daughter I was sorry I'd lost it while reading about Mathias. Didn't matter, she said. She hadn't really been listening anyway.

**FRED BARNES**



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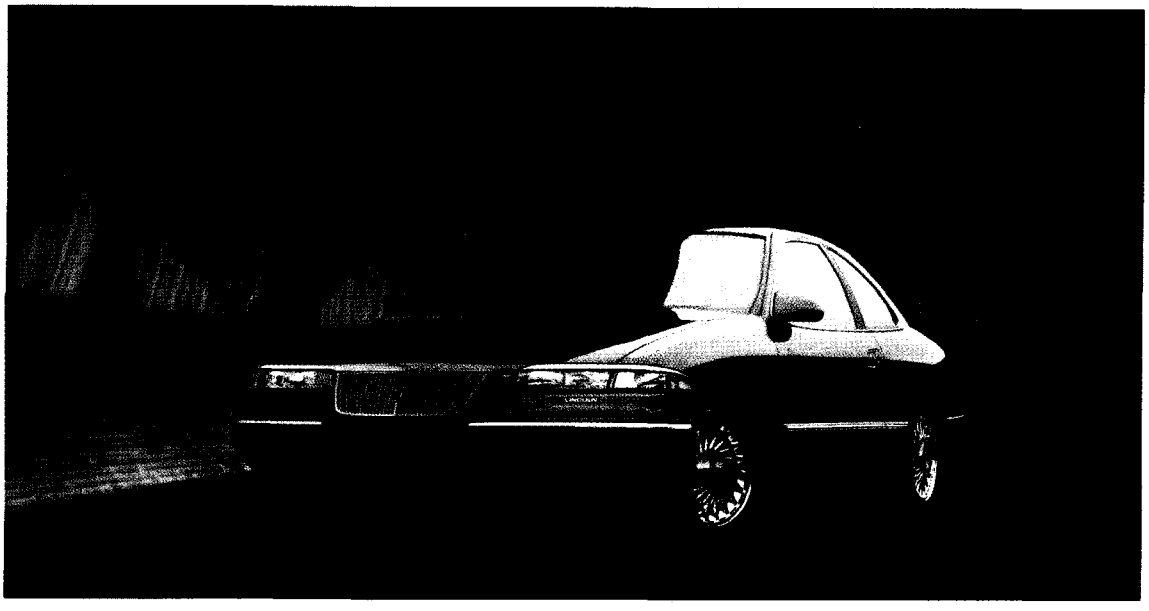

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